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Grantee and Contact Information

ARP ESSER PR Award Number (e.g., S425U2100XX):

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By signing this document, I agree to each of the assurances listed in Appendix C and further assure that: To the best of my knowledge and belief, all information and data included in this plan are true and correct.	
Chief State School Officer or Authorized Representative (Printed Name) Kirsten Baesler, State Superintendent	
Signature of Authorized SEA Representative 	Date: 06.07.2021 07.14.2021 07.30.2021

A. Describing the State's Current Status and Needs

The Department recognizes the extraordinary efforts made by States, LEAs, and educators to support students during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this section, SEAs will describe the progress they have made, the priorities and student needs guiding their ARP ESSER funding decisions, and their current and projected operating status.

- Progress and Promising Practices: Provide your assessment of the top 2-3 strategies that have been most effective in supporting the needs of students in your State during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for students most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Please include, if applicable, how your State will submit and encourage its LEAs to submit lessons learned and best practices to the Department's [*Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse*](#) so that they can be shared with other States and LEAs.

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction has implemented numerous strategies over the past year to support students during the pandemic. We have highlighted three strategies below that we believe have been particularly beneficial in addressing student needs across the state.

- Work as One Approach: The North Dakota Healthy Return to Learning (ND HRTL) team is a diverse team of subject matter experts in public health and K12 education who collaborate with state agencies and communities to provide resources, processes, and strategies that schools, local public health and the state need to keep schools operating in their dual mission of high-quality education for all students while ensuring public health. Subject matter experts include a local physician experienced in infectious disease, a local public health administrator, and an experienced K-12 school administrator being supported by the NDDPI and ND Dept of Health (NDDoH).

The objective of this team is to ensure communication, preparation, and response activities are timely and effective. The goal is to protect students and staff from the virus so that educators can provide high quality service to all students. North Dakota is fortunate to have skilled school administrators and health providers throughout the state who work in their capacity to optimize students return to school in a safe way. As the situation with COVID-19 evolves, we know there will be situations our education system has never experienced before. The ND Healthy Return to Learning team was created to help schools and local public health through these experiences.

The ND Healthy Return to Learning team collaborates with NDDPI, NDDoH, ND Dept of Emergency Services (NDDDES), and the ND National Guard to create resources and accompanying tools for schools to utilize as they work through the diverse scenarios they will encounter this school year.

- ✓ Responsibilities: serve as key resource to school and LPH administration, coordinate across state and regional supports, support state health and education officials, respond to health and epidemiology questions as they relate to K-12 settings, facilitate connections with NDDoH, LPH, NDDPI and LEAs, and implement and refine ND Healthy Return to Learning Smart School Response Guidance. They coordinated districtwide screening and

rapid testing for staff, students and school visitors. They also coordinated state processes between school officials and local public health officials for contact tracing.

While the Healthy Return to Learning team addressed the physical health needs of our students it took many partners to Work As One to address the social emotional needs of our students, staff and families.

The [ND Education to Workforce Pathways through SEL Coalition exists to meet those needs](#). In partnership with the South East Education Cooperative, NDDPI, NDDHS, the Governor's Office, and the Department of Commerce, the Central Region Education Association leads a statewide coalition to break down barriers and support greater implementation of SEL in the development of K-12 workforce pathways. The coalition consists of 25 members representing diverse, cross-sector private, public, and non-profit perspectives. This effort leverages SEL competencies to create greater opportunity for state-level initiative alignment and cohesion, strengthening partnership between education and business/industry, to build respect and shared responsibility in preparing students to become [Choice Ready](#).

Additionally the [ND Full-Service Community Schools Consortium, supported by REAs, LEAs, NDDPI, NDDoH and NDDHS is a](#) group of schools actively partnering with pipeline service partners and providers to serve as a neighborhood hub where comprehensive supports are coordinated and provided for students and families through an integrated approach in their local community.

All of these efforts will remain important to North Dakota's efforts to fully recover from COVID 19.

- [Provide Free Tutoring, Online Curriculum in Math, Reading and Writing and Support to North Dakota Students](#): As one of our key strategies, the NDDPI partnered with Edmentum and Schoolhouse. World to provide free tutoring, resources and support to all North Dakota students.
 - ✓ [Exact Path](#): The NDDPI partnered with the ND Governor's Office partnered to ensure all schools had the tools they needed to address student learning and the missed learning opportunities or gaps that may have occurred due to COVID-19 disruptions. Part of their strategy was to offer Edmentum's Exact Path to all North Dakota K-12 students. Schools and districts across the state could use this reading, writing and mathematics tool to help students catch up, fill in learning gaps or even provide next level challenges – really providing precision learning for ND students.

The online tool combines adaptive diagnostics with individualized instruction and learning paths for K-12 students. After understanding a student's level of knowledge, a personalized learning pathway is created to ensure students reach academic growth goals. North Dakota Exact Path was used in a variety of learning environments – at home with families, in the classroom face to face, hybrid and distance learning scenarios.

- ✓ Schoolhouse.world: Through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with NDDPI, Schoolhouse.world has provided free tutoring for math (pre-algebra through calculus), SAT prep, AP prep, and college applications through their website: <https://schoolhouse.world>. Schoolhouse.world provides the opportunity for students to participate in live, small-group tutoring sessions. Tutoring can be used independently or to complement [Khan Academy](#) lessons. Small-group, high-impact tutoring is immensely effective in closing achievement gaps, and this partnership can be beneficial for students, as well as for teachers and administrators. This free network is available to all North Dakota schools and students.
- Focus on Special Education: As a result of consultation with the local special education units within the state, and to address the identified need for COVID relief dollars, the Department and the Office of Special Education provided two grant opportunities under the ESSER I funding source to local special education units. The first opportunity was for Early Childhood Special Education service needs due to COVID-19.

The funds were used by the local units to obtain resources that would have a direct impact on families and young children with disabilities. The SEA worked with the local special education units to best utilize funds based on individual program and population needs. Funds are being used for Early Childhood assessment tools, evidence-based emotional and behavioral supports and interventions for early childhood programs, improved access to technology implementation, and linking home and school partnerships.

A second funding opportunity was provided to the Special Education Units to address the following: COVID-19 compensatory services, professional development and staff training, positive emotional and evidence-based behavioral supports and interventions, improved access to technology implementation, assessments to address learning loss and recovery, linking home, school and community partnerships, and family supports to promote continued engagement.

The Department frequently maintains and updates a resource site for educators, regarding evidence-based practices and curriculums to address learning loss.

- Overall Priorities: Provide your assessment of the top 2-3 issues currently facing students and schools across your State as a result of or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic including, to the extent possible, data illustrating why these are the most critical and/or most widespread issues facing schools and students.

North Dakota, just as all the other states, has many issues facing students and schools across the state as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have identified the three most critical and widespread issues facing our state below.

- COVID Fatigue: The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly been hard on everyone and has caused anxiety, stress, and fatigue universally around the globe. School personnel have

been particularly impacted by the pandemic. The majority of ND schools opened their buildings for in-person learning in August/September 2020 while also teaching online for families who chose that option for their students. Along with numerous safety concerns, having to teach both in person and online has been challenging for staff. We continue to get reports of COVID fatigue across the state. As schools prepare for summer, the vast majority of them are interested in offering summer school and various camps to students. However, due to the COVID fatigue, schools are having difficulty finding staff willing to work a summer school program. In addition, students and families are tired from attending a full school year in-person with COVID restrictions and appear less interested in extending their learning opportunities over the summer month

- Equity gaps/Disparity in Learning: The state of North Dakota is extremely fortunate in that the vast majority of our schools have had in person learning for the entire 2020-2021 school year. However, a significant concern statewide is the disparity in learning and equity gaps for our most vulnerable learners. Whereas most students were able to quickly adapt to the shift to distance learning, many of our at-risk learners struggled with the distance learning format and the pure disruption of lives COVID 19 has caused. There is evidence that the pandemic has put them further behind or at risk in their learning.
- Staff Shortages: Even before the COVID-19 pandemic began, North Dakota was struggling with teacher shortages like many other states. The pandemic has further exacerbated this problem. The stress of having to both teach in person and teach those students who wanted to remain in a distance learning format has caused many teachers to contemplate retiring earlier or making a career change.
- Identifying Needs of Underserved Students: Describe your State's 2-3 highest priority academic, social, emotional, and/or mental health needs for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year (if applicable) and for the 2021-2022 school year related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on each of the following student groups:
 - i. Students from low-income families,
 - ii. Students from each racial or ethnic group (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race or ethnicity),
 - iii. Gender (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by gender),
 - iv. English learners,
 - v. Children with disabilities (including infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA")),
 - vi. Students experiencing homelessness,
 - vii. Children and youth in foster care,
 - viii. Migratory students, and other groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic that have been identified by the SEA (e.g., youth involved in the criminal justice system, students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures, and LGBTQ+ students).

To the extent possible, this description should include data on indicators such as estimates of the academic impact of lost instructional time,¹ chronic absenteeism, student engagement, and social-emotional well-being.

Complete the table below, adding rows as necessary, or provide a narrative description.

Table A1.

Student group	Highest priority needs
Students from low-income families	<i>30% of students in ND are designated as low-income. There were existing academic disparities even prior to the pandemic, as 67% of low-income students compared to 52% of all students remain novice or partially proficient in ELA. Math fares no better; While 56% of all students are considered novice or partially proficient, the number is 73% of low-income students. Literacy and numeracy will continue to be a focus in upcoming years.</i>
Students from each racial or ethnic background used by the State for reporting purposes – please add a row for each racial or ethnic group (e.g., identifying disparities and focusing on underserved student groups by race/ethnicity)	<i>North Dakota's students experienced lost instructional time along with impacts to graduation rates, dropout rates, attendance rates, and social / emotional learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.</i> <i>The Fall 2020-2021 Racial and Ethnic Enrollment Percentage Rates as represented on Insights were:</i> • <i>White: 75</i> • <i>Native American: 10</i> • <i>African American: 7</i> • <i>Hispanic: 6</i> • <i>Asian American: 2</i> • <i>Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander: <1</i> <i>The disparities below are based upon 2019-2020 4-Year Graduation Rate, 2019-2020 Dropout Rate, 2019-2020 Attendance Rate, and 2018-2019 State Assessment results since State Assessments were not administered in 2019-2020 due to COVID-19.</i>
White:	<i>All Student Rate in Parentheses, negative disparities highlighted in red:</i> • <i>2019-2020 4-Year Graduation Rate: 93.3 (90.3)</i> • <i>2019-2020 Dropout Rate: 1.0 (1.0)</i> • <i>2019-2020 Attendance Rate 96.0 (96.0)</i> • <i>2018-2019 State Assessment ELA: 52.0 (47.0)</i> <i>2018-2019 State Assessment Math: 50.0 (45.0)</i>
Native American	<i>All Student Rate in Parentheses, negative disparities highlighted in red:</i> • <i>2019-2020 4-Year Graduation Rate: 78.4 (90.3)</i> • <i>2019-2020 Dropout Rate: 3.0 (1.0)</i> • <i>2019-2020 Attendance Rate 93.0 (96.0)</i> • <i>2018-2019 State Assessment ELA: 26.0 (47.0)</i> <i>2018-2019 State Assessment Math: 21.0 (45.0)</i>

¹ For the purposes of the plan, “academic impact of lost instructional time” refers to “learning loss” experienced by students as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as referenced in the ARP Act and the CRRSA Act.

Student group	Highest priority needs
African American	<i>All Student Rate in Parentheses, negative disparities highlighted in red:</i> • 2019-2020 4-Year Graduation Rate: 81.9 (90.3) • 2019-2020 Dropout Rate: 2.0 (1.0) • 2019-2020 Attendance Rate 95.0 (96.0) • 2018-2019 State Assessment ELA: 33.0 (47.0) • 2018-2019 State Assessment Math: 24.0 (45.0)
Hispanic	<i>All Student Rate in Parentheses, negative disparities highlighted in red:</i> • 2019-2020 4-Year Graduation Rate: 76.9 (90.3) • 2019-2020 Dropout Rate: 2.0 (1.0) • 2019-2020 Attendance Rate 94.0 (96.0) • 2018-2019 State Assessment ELA: 34.0 (47.0) 2018-2019 State Assessment Math: 27.0 (45.0)
Asian American	<i>All Student Rate in Parentheses, negative disparities highlighted in red:</i> • 2019-2020 4-Year Graduation Rate: 89.3 (90.3) • 2019-2020 Dropout Rate: 1.0 (1.0) • 2019-2020 Attendance Rate 96.0 (96.0) • 2018-2019 State Assessment ELA: 52.0 (47.0) 2018-2019 State Assessment Math: 49.0 (45.0)
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	<i>All Student Rate in Parentheses, negative disparities highlighted in red:</i> • 2019-2020 4-Year Graduation Rate: 75.0 (90.3) • 2019-2020 Dropout Rate: 5.0 (1.0) • 2019-2020 Attendance Rate 95.0 (96.0) • 2018-2019 State Assessment ELA: 44.0 (47.0) 2018-2019 State Assessment Math: 34.0 (45.0)
Migratory students	<i>The North Dakota Migrant Summer Program in 2020, was carried out as a distance only program. We served 181 students throughout North Dakota. This was an expansion of service area outside our face-to-face program, we usually provide. COVID-19 created an opportunity to reach students outside our normal busing area.</i> <i>The North Dakota migrant program instructional component is limited to summers only. Normally state assessment scores in language arts and math help determine the greatest needs of our migrant students and help determine the concern statements that target instruction and other services of need. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, state assessments were not available. As a result, ALTA (Applied Learning Technology Associates), along with the CNA committee identified general needs from baseline data and examined concern statements to identify general areas of potential high priority needs for migrant students within the state. ALTA developed a data collection format in which teachers could rate individual student proficiency K-12, in language arts and math, in relation</i>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	<i>to skills identified in North Dakota State Standards. Data collection formats included demographic data on students, PFS status as well as English language proficiency test scores (when available) Survey of administrators, teachers and parents were also considered. The Migrant Literacy Net reading screener results were also used to determine these needs of concern:</i> <i>1. We are concerned that instruction for migrant students in language arts may not be effectively targeting the foundational skills necessary to facilitate success at the appropriate grade levels to ensure that students are acquiring the basic building blocks necessary to master reading and writing. ANALYSIS: Due to COVID-19 state assessments were unavailable. State assessments are not given during the summer program, so those scores considered would be only for students who were in the state at the time of the assessment. 2019 scores showed all students between novice and partial proficiency that took the reading assessment.</i> <i>1. We are concerned that instruction for migrant students in mathematics may not be effectively targeting the foundational skills necessary to facilitate success at the appropriate grade levels to ensure that students are acquiring the basic building blocks necessary to master mathematics. ANALYSIS: As with reading/language arts, state assessments in math were not administered in 2020. Scores in mathematics were available for 54 migrant students in 2019. There are no academic year programs receiving migrant funding, and assessments are not administered during summer. 53 migrant students completing the 2019 assessment, scored between novice and partially proficient.</i> <i>2. We are concerned that there is a low graduation rate and retention rate for migrant students in North Dakota, and there is a need to identify the most effective research-based instructional programs and strategies to increase graduation rates for migrant students, particularly for those that are priority for service students.</i> <i>3. ANALYSIS: Data was collected of teacher ratings of student performance for secondary students (9-12) for language arts (N=40) and Mathematics (N=40). The overall mean proficiency rating in grades 9-12 for language arts on the 4-point state proficiency rubric</i>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	<i>(4=advanced, 3=proficient, 2=partially proficient, 1-novice) was 2.66 (partially proficient). The overall mean for students grades 9-12 for mathematics was 2.68 (partially proficient).</i> 4. <i>We are concerned that issues such as the need for other services for families and students may be affecting the ability of migratory children to effectively participate in school and achieve proficiency in core content. (reading, math, etc.) ANALYSIS: Data was collected to identify the need for other services that may be affecting the ability of migrant students to be successful in school from a variety of sources (the administrator/teacher survey, parent surveys and a survey to indicate school readiness as well as English language proficiency scores.</i> <i>The group which most closely represents migrant students in North Dakota are the English Learners. Therefore, the performance targets related to language arts and math proficiency for migrant students reflect similar goals as the state goals for English Learners (EL). Due to the pandemic, measurable program outcomes were revised based on the performance targets above. Measurable Outcomes:</i> <i>1. Reading Comprehension: Proficiency in reading comprehension will increase by an average of 6% per year for all migrant students targeted for reading instruction in the summer, based on state assessment results or teacher ratings and/or other assessments of student performance in relation to state content standards.</i> <i>2. Writing: Proficiency in writing will increase by an average of 6% per year for all migrant students targeted for writing instruction in the summer, based on state assessment results or teacher ratings and/or other assessments of student performance in relation to state content standards.</i> <i>3. Principles of Language: Proficiency in these discreet skills will increase by an average of 6% per year for all migrant students targeted for reading instruction in the summer, based on state assessment results or teacher ratings and/or other assessments of student performance in relation to state content standards.</i> <i>4. Research Process in Proficiency in research in the process of reading will increase by an average of 6% per year for all migrant students</i>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	<i>targeted for reading instruction in the summer, based on state assessment results or teacher ratings and/or other assessments of student performance in relation to state content standards.</i> 5. <i>Number Sense & Basic Operations in Math: Proficiency in number sense and operation will increase by an average of 6% per year for all migrant students targeted for math instruction in the summer., based on state assessment results or teacher ratings and/or other assessments of student performance in relation to state content standards.</i> 6. <i>Algebra, Patterns and Functions: Proficiency in algebra, patterns and functions will increase by an average of 6% per year for all migrant students targeted for math instruction in the summer based on state assessment results or teacher ratings and/or other assessments of student performance in relation to state content standards.</i> 7. <i>Geometry and Spatial Relations: Proficiency in geometry and spatial relations will increase by an average of 6% per year for all migrant students targeted for math instruction in the summer based on state assessment results or teacher ratings and/or other assessment of student performance in relation to state content standards.</i> 8. <i>Data Analysis, Statistics and Probability: Proficiency in data analysis, statistics and probability will increase by an average of 6% per year for all migrant students targeted for math instruction in the summer based on state assessment results or teacher ratings and/or other assessments of student performance in relation to state content standards.</i> 9. <i>Overcoming Academic Barriers to Graduation: 80% of migrant students targeted for reading, math, and English language instruction in the summer program will demonstrate progress toward mastery in reading, math and English language fluency based on teacher ratings and/or other assessments of student performance in order to facilitate progress towards high school graduation.</i> 10. <i>Effective Staff Development to Facilitate English Language Proficiency: 80% of staff will report that ESL training prior to the summer program to be effective in assisting teachers to work with EL students.</i>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	11. <i>Coordinate with other agencies to provide effective health services for all summer program students to assist in overcoming health related barriers to academic progress. 80% migrant parents and staff will rate the summer health program effective in providing health services to students which facilitate student academic success.</i> 12. <i>Enhance migrant parent involvement in the education of their children in reading and mathematics: 80% of parents who participate in the Migrant Parent Empowerment consortium parent involvement activities will report that the program was effective in assisting them to help their children to learn to read and be proficient in math.</i> <i>Ways we plan to address the needs this year:</i> 1. <i>Implement tutoring and small group instruction in the Fall and Spring of regular school year.</i> 2. <i>Utilize instructional materials specifically designed for migrant students from the Migrant Literacy NET, including lesson plans and online tutorials.</i> 3. <i>Develop individual learning plans for all priority for service students.</i> 4. <i>Utilize bilingual and bicultural staff whenever possible for instruction.</i> 5. <i>Target writing and reading comprehension instruction for all migrant students.</i> 6. <i>Target number sense, basic operations as well as algebra, patterns, and functions instruction for K-4 migrant students in math.</i> 7. <i>Target algebra, patterns and functions and measurement for students in grade 5-12 in math.</i> 8. <i>Utilize the electronic graduation plans specifically designed for migrant students on the Migrant Literacy NET to assist secondary migrant students to overcome barriers to graduation.</i> 9. <i>Provide training to all staff teaching in the summer program on the use of ESL strategies with EL students.</i> 10. <i>Collaborate with the MPEC consortium to identify and train parent advocates and provide parent training in the use of the MLN resources to facilitate student success.</i> 11. <i>Utilize course date from MSIX and other sources as well as transcripts to transfer date from high school to high school.</i>

Student group	Highest priority needs
	12. Utilize the P.A.S.S. program to fill in credit accrual gaps. 13. Expand the summer migrant program to provide academic service⁴ in spring/or fall when feasible to meet the needs of migrant students. 14. Coordinate with external agencies or provide a summer health fair to meet student needs targeting vision, hearing, dental and physical assessment. 15. All services provided must utilize strategies and precautions required by the COVID-19 pandemic. When possible, distance education options will be used for instruction for migrant students. For districts that have returned to onsite instruction rigorous safety precautions should be maintained (sanitizing classrooms, wearing masks, and appropriate social distancing).
Other groups of students identified by the State (e.g., youth involved in the criminal justice system, students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures, LGBTQ+ students)	<i>At-risk subgroups such as those served by Neglected and Delinquent programs, those suffering from chronic absenteeism, and transient students have missed the most in-person instruction. The NDDPI has a variety of data metrics to track these areas, and efforts have been made to increase statewide guidance in Credit Accrual and Recovery, as a high-priority need in many at-risk groups is the ability to earn and recover credit. In addition, effective transitions between and among districts is a high-priority need area, and efforts are being made to increase communication, evaluate/track student outcomes, and improve guidance to the field.</i>

- Understanding the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic:** Describe how the SEA will support its LEAs in identifying the extent of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning and student well-being, including identifying the groups of students most impacted by the pandemic. Where possible, please identify the data sources the SEA will suggest its LEAs use in thoughtfully diagnosing areas of need, including data on the academic, social, emotional, and mental health impacts of lost instructional time.

As detailed in **Executive Order 2020-38**, all school districts were required to have a Distance Learning Plan and offer students the opportunity to participate in distance instruction during the 2020-2021 school year. The order also required NDDPI to evaluate the implementation of distance learning occurring across the state to ensure continuity of education for all students. In the fall of 2020, NDDPI consulted with the following partnerships to create an evaluation process: ND United (teacher's union) ND Council of Educational Leaders (administrators' and directors' association), ND School Board Association, ND University System, and the governor's office. To continue this evaluation of distance learning across North Dakota, the Governor's Office and NDDPI conducted a survey for all parents, families, and students enrolled in public K-12 schools to provide feedback about student school experiences, specific to distance learning, between August 2020 and February 2021. The survey is a collaborative project between the Department of Public Instruction and the

North Dakota University System and provides students and their families an opportunity to express how North Dakota's public education system worked for them during the COVID-19 pandemic. This information was important to pinpoint successes and areas of improvement. Currently, the NDDPI is in the process of collecting this data from ND educators, as well. The NDDPI, partnering again with the ND University System, is seeking feedback from licensed school/ district personnel, as well as paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, about the education experience from August 2020 to March 2021. This survey was sent directly to each educator in their school email, with each respondent receiving a unique link. All responses will be combined and summarized, so no individual's responses will be identifiable in any report and will only be accessed by a researcher. This information will be another data point in which the NDDPI will continually use to strengthen the support to schools.

One of the most important data points to be considered is attendance and engagement. It is important for a school/district, that was using distance education or hybrid, to consider (for each student) the frequency in which the student was attending and engaged. Another factor that needs to be considered is the opportunity to learn data (OTL). Other parts of this document touch on these data points as well, examples would be access to technology, high speed internet, time with educators, mode of instruction, etc. It is important that when considering impact data, that it is not looked at with a narrowed lens. In ND, we did move forward with our statewide summative assessment and have a participation rate that is, relatively speaking, high (roughly about 92%). We know that we need to communicate results delicately and highlight that all sources of data need to be considered when trying to diagnose impact. We are also in a unique situation with the number of schools that were able to educate almost completely face-to-face for a large portion of the school year. Starting with the largest grain size, the NDSA results and Individual Student Reports are currently available to districts and schools. These include breakdowns in each subject area and down to the core concept layers. In the overall look (Total) view – a scale score is available, and a Lexile/Quantile measure is included.

We have developed information relating to Lexile and Quantile scores that can be directly used by parents, families, and educators. Communicating to the field that this data can give a broad view of student achievement via grade level expectations and general view of student proficiency in relation to the standards is important. This set of data can also be broken down by student groups and evaluating overall trends can shine a light on areas to start to explore with smaller grain size evaluation/diagnosing tools/data. NDDPI has also encouraged the continued use of interim/benchmark assessments to evaluate relative performance and monitor progress/current status. With no NDSA administered last school year, an emphasis was placed on trying to administer this level of assessment (most likely largest grain size and only assessment given to a certain grade level of students in a district). All the forms of formative assessment coming from the classroom and teacher level are extremely important and this plays into the attendance and engagement data. A teacher's feel for their class and individual student's progress is hard to quantify or standardize but can be vital to diagnosing areas of need. Lastly, the addition or use of an efficient diagnostic assessment can give focused data on existing knowledge and skills and if using tiers of support or placing in programs for assisting in areas of need these small grain size assessments can be very effective. Once again, we want to reiterate that the focus needs to be on informing improvement planning, finding areas of need, and improving student learning. It will be important to remind and communicate that just because school continued typically or close to typically, does not mean there was not an effect on learning or impact in another area

such as social or emotional learning. Spending time and putting forth an effort to really focus in on impact now will pay dividends as we progress forward.

The NDDPI partners with Regional Education Associations to provide training to districts that are interested in making a change to their entire system using a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (NDMTSS) that is based upon data collected from the district to address their specific needs. A district might find their greatest need is in either academics, behavior or social emotional learning. The district may opt to begin to create a system in either one of the identified need areas or may opt to develop a system in a couple different areas. Prior to creating their system, the district is asked to complete an evaluation to determine where they are currently functioning. The information also leads the district team to determine where they want to go and where their areas of greatest need lie. Once the districts needs and wishes are identified, state and national presenters assist in developing pathways to create a multi-tiered system supports that leads to improvement for administrators, teachers, and student outcomes within the district.

NDMTSS is a framework to provide all students with the best opportunities to succeed academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally in school. NDMTSS focuses on providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals. Data are used to allocate resources to improve student learning and support staff implementation of effective practices.

Due to the pandemic, NDMTSS training began to be offered virtually. Virtual training has offered a way to reach out to more school districts interested in advancing their academic, behavioral, or social emotional learning system. NDMTSS training is provided over multiple sessions and provides the opportunity to partake in coaching calls and walk-throughs by both national and state presenters knowledgeable in their area of expertise (academic, behavior, social emotional) to increase the likelihood the district's system will lead to increased student performance in either academics, behavior, or social emotional learning.

- **School Operating Status:** It is essential to have data on how students are learning in order to support the goals of access and equity, especially for student groups that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Describe the current status of data collection on operational status and mode of instruction of all schools in your State.

This description must include:

- i. A description of to what extent, and how frequently, the State collects now and will collect in the future data for all schools in your State on:
 - a. Mode of instruction: The number of schools in your State that are offering fully remote or online-only instruction; both remote/online and in-person instruction (hybrid model); and/or full-time in-person instruction.
*[NDDPI Website](#) - Scroll down and Click on " **Insights**" on the tile called **DASHBOARD**. Then click **Explore Public K-12**, then click **Statewide Education Data**, then click **Students**, then click **Enrollment**, then click **Demographics** for the state results. See more info below.*
 - b. Enrollment: Student enrollment for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups described in A.3.i-viii for each mode of instruction; and on the home page of the

[NDDPI Website](#) - Scroll down and Click on” **Insights**” on the tile called DASHBOARD. Then click **Explore Public K-12**, then click **Statewide Education Data**, then click **Students**, then click **Enrollment**, then click **Demographics** for the state results. See more info below.

- c. Attendance: Student attendance for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups described in A.3.i-viii for each mode of instruction. On the home page of the [NDDPI Website](#) - Scroll down and Click on” **Insights**” on the tile called DASHBOARD. Then click **Explore Public K-12**, then click **Statewide Education Data**, then click **Students**, then click **Attendance Rate**, then click **Demographics** for the state results. See more info below.

5 i (a) Mode of Instruction Answer: The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, along with the North Dakota Information Technology Department, EduTech/PowerSchool all worked together to create a spot on the North Dakota “Insights” Dashboard which shows the daily School, District and State Learning Environment.

Link: <https://insights.nd.gov/Education/School/COVID/0500110333>

It was a collaborative effort as PowerSchool had to create a spot on their platform to enter the daily information for each student if they were going Face to Face, Hybrid or Distance Learning. That data was sent to the North Dakota SLDS on a nightly basis through vertical reporting. The next day the results would be shown on “Insights.”

Users can hover over the School Learning Environment over Time by Student Count or by School Learning Environment over Time by Percent of Total Students and see the results for each school day. At the very bottom you can see the Total Student Enrollment for the current day. The attendance feature of the dashboard began Sept. 15, 2020 and ended May 13. Data will stay on the dashboard indefinitely.

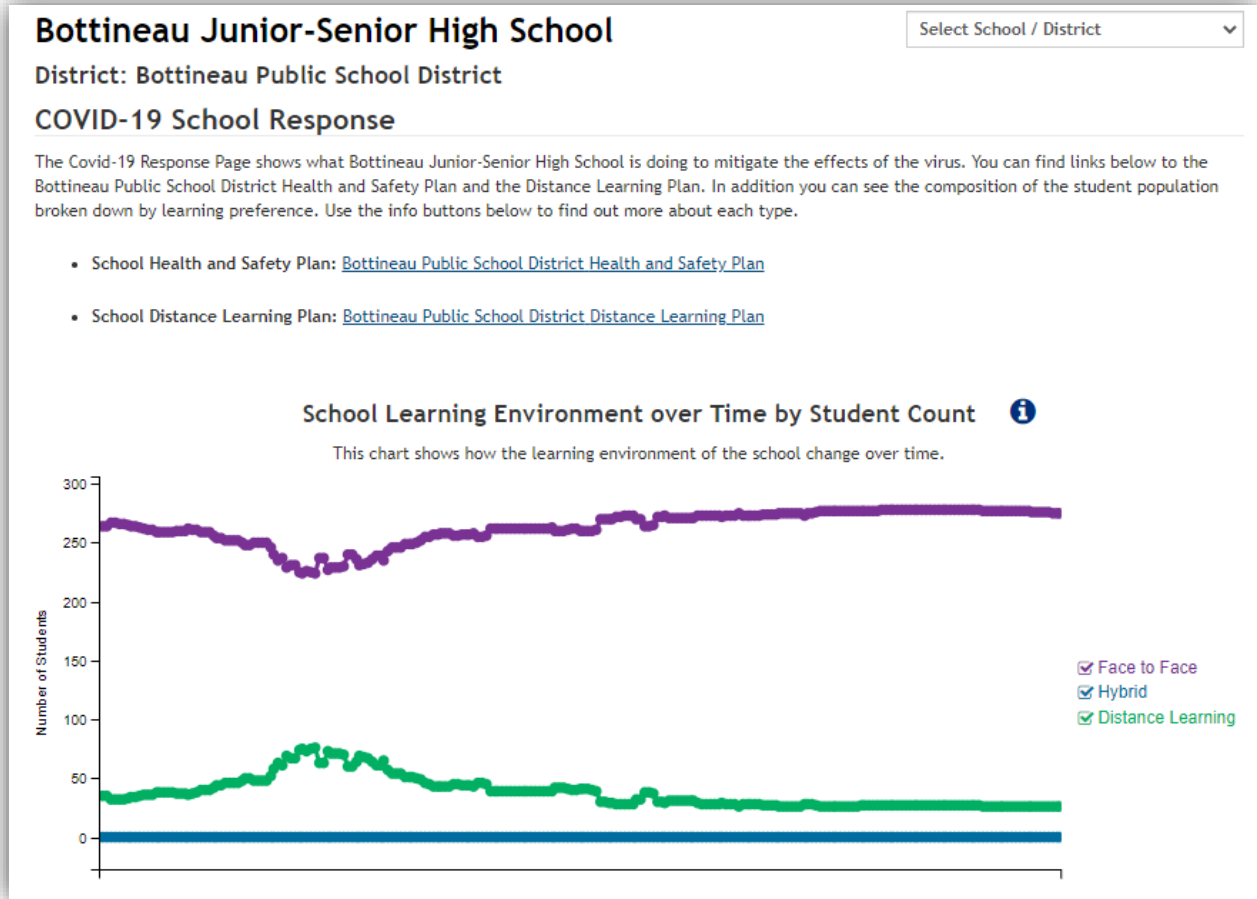
5 i (b) Enrollment Answer: Student enrollment for all students and disaggregated for each of the student groups described in A.3.i-viii for each mode of instruction; and On the home page of the [NDDPI Website](#) - Scroll down and click on ”**Insights**” on the tile called DASHBOARD. Then click **Explore Public K-12**, then click **Statewide Education Data**, then click **Students**, then click **Enrollment**, then click **Demographics** for the state results.

NOTE: Disaggregated data will be available on June 21.

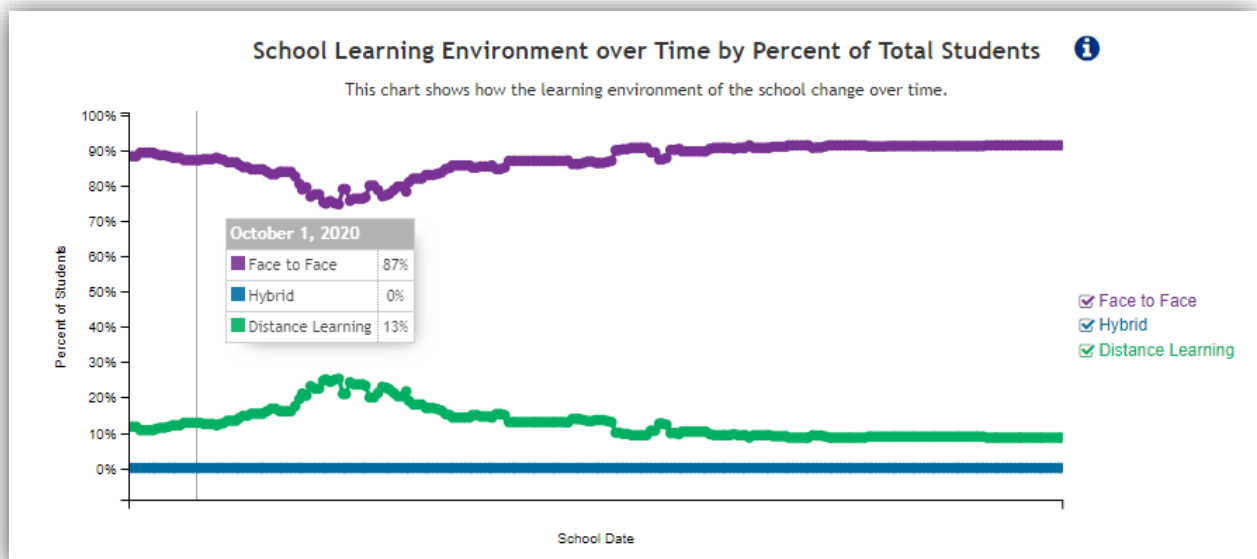
5 i (c) Attendance Answer: On the home page of the [NDDPI Website](#) - Scroll down and Click on ”**Insights**” on the tile called DASHBOARD. Then click **Explore Public K-12**, then click **Statewide Education Data**, then click **Students**, then click **Attendance Rate**, then click **Demographics** for the state results.

Example: Below is an example of School Learning Environment over Time by Count, Percent and Attendance in order on North Dakota Education Dashboard:

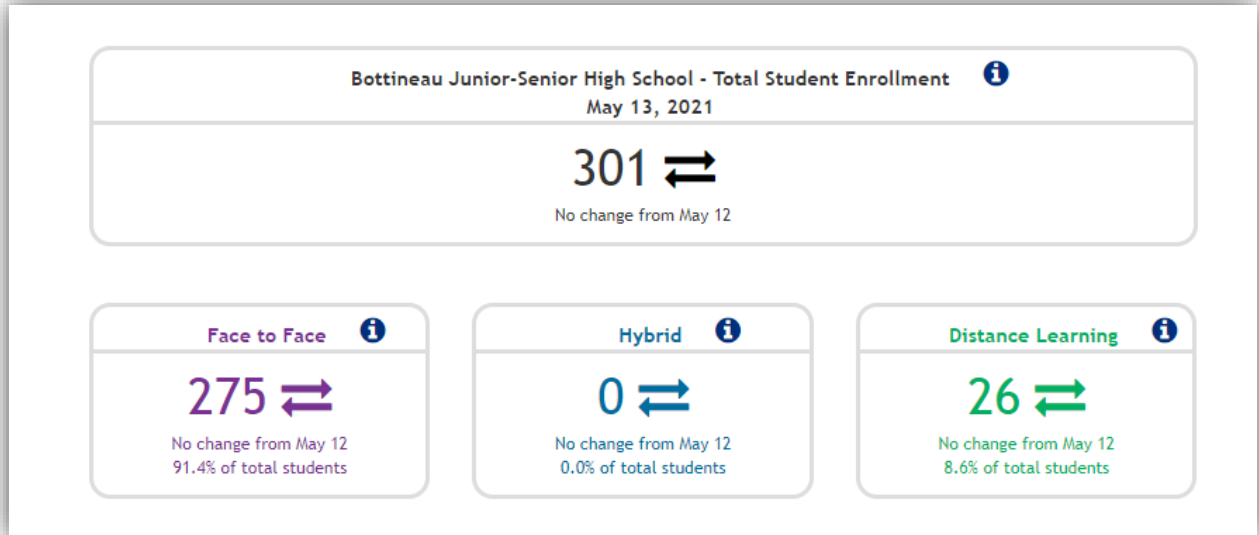
Count (May 13, 2021):



Percent (May 13, 2021):



Attendance (May 13, 2021):



- ii. The data described in A.5.i.a. and b. using the template in Appendix A (and to the extent available, the data described in A.5.i.c.) for the most recent time period available. Please note that this data can be submitted separately within 14 calendar days after a State submits this plan. The SEA must also make this data publicly available on its website as soon as possible but no later than June 21, 2021, and regularly provide updated available information on its website. The Department will periodically review data listed in A.5.i on SEA websites.

Data is available on the Insights Dashboard mentioned above.

- iii. To the extent available, a description of the planned operational status and mode of instruction for the State and its LEAs for Summer 2021 and for the 2021-2022 school year.

This year's summer school session and 2021-2022 school year will be face-to-face as the Governor's Executive Order that allowed distance learning has been [rescinded](#). Legislation passed in the 2021 legislative assembly allows schools and districts with existing physical plants the authority to provide distance learning through the creation of a new plant called Virtual Academies designed exclusively to deliver virtual learning. Public school districts will receive funding formula payments for each student enrolled in these virtual academies at the same rate as students enrolled in physical plants.

This academy must abide by all school approval North Dakota Century Code laws in the state of North Dakota. [House Bill 1388](#) outlines virtual schooling for the next year.

In addition, districts may conduct distance learning in the case of weather or other condition if they have a School Board policy outlining such distance learning. [House Bill 1232](#) outlines this procedure.

If a district does not create a virtual academy to exist with its physical plants, the default is for all schools to offer face-to-face instruction for the 2021-2022 school year.

B. Safely Reopening Schools and Sustaining their Safe Operations.

The Department recognizes that safely reopening schools and sustaining their safe operations to maximize in-person instruction is essential for student learning and student well-being, and especially for being able to address the educational inequities that have been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this section, SEAs will describe how they will support their LEAs in this vital area.

- Support for LEAs: Describe how the SEA will support its LEAs in safely returning to in-person instruction and sustaining the safe operation of schools. This description must include:
 - i. How the SEA will support its LEAs implementing, to the greatest extent practicable, prevention and mitigation policies in line with the most up-to-date guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) for the reopening and operation of school facilities to effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff.

*Complete the table below, adding rows as necessary, **or provide a narrative description.***

In North Dakota, the vast majority of our schools returned to in-person learning in August/September 2020, at the beginning of our 2020-2021 school year. One of the most successful strategies employed in our state was the creation of a “Healthy Return to Learning Team.” (HRTL). The NDDPI will continue to fully support the HRTL team through the upcoming school years as needed.

Healthy Return to Learning Smart School Response Guidance Document and supporting material

Overall goal guiding the team was the safe return to in-person instruction. This was coordinated with many partners (NDDPI, NDDoH, NDDHS, NDDES, ND National Guard, Governor’s Office, legislators) to develop and refine processes, procedures, and guidelines to:

- Implement effective mitigation strategies
- Place a strong emphasis on universal masking as the most effective strategy to return kids to school
- Effectively track and monitor COVID cases and closes contacts

- Differentiation in academic day and extracurricular activities to understand impact and spread
- Develop guidelines to assist in the determination of building closures
- Develop a public K-12 COVID dashboard to more effectively monitor impact in a more transparent way
- Focus on risk-informed decision making that considered the whole picture of student academics, well-being, and safety
- Implement COVID screening program for school staff

Evaluated data and most current published research to inform decision making and focus:

- Generated mask to mask quarantine exemption idea and pushed for adoption
- Determined hybrid model not ideal for reducing transmission and educated schools on best options
- Pushed away from community level spread being the trigger to close schools
- Untangled the community and school spread level correlation

Town Halls and Debriefing Emails helped schools and local public health progressively navigate the ever-changing COVID landscape to return to in-person instruction. Weekly sessions provided education, lessons learned, and next steps that were current, relevant, factual, and easy to access when the content was needed. We believe engaging schools in this format provided a forum for questions and regular information that helped schools cut through the myriad of information available to focus on what really moved them forward toward or to maintain in-person learning.

Table B1.

Mitigation strategy	SEA response
Universal and correct wearing of masks	<i>The NDDoH developed procedure guidance for facemask use including safety practices, procedures for donning and doffing a facemask, etc. State and local agencies worked collaboratively to communicate with K-12 administrators and staff regarding the correct wearing of masks.</i>
Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	<i>Member's from the Governor's Office staff, NDDoH, NDDPI, and LPHUs developed consistent messaging about the need for people to practice physical distancing, social distancing and limit large gatherings. The use of pods and cohorts was encouraged in the K-12 schools as a way to decrease spread. The schools were also strongly encouraged to utilize additional space, if available, to reduce class sizes. Lunchroom practices regarding physical distancing were also addressed.</i>
Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	<i>The NDDoH, NDDPI, and LPHUs worked as partners to raise awareness about preventing and stopping the spread of infections. Handwashing techniques were communicated broadly as the easiest way to prevent germs, etc. from entering the body</i>

Mitigation strategy	SEA response
	<i>and making one sick. NDDoH created a website on preventing COVID-19. It included various social media cover photos, door signs, posters, and more.</i>
Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation	<i>The Healthy Return to Learning Team invited the ND Safety Council to present information during a Town Hall Meeting regarding maintaining healthy facilities, including information on improving ventilation and HVAC modifications. The Town Hall video recordings were made available to all ND administrators, School Board members, LPHU's, and educators.</i>
Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments	<i>The NDDoH developed a system for contact tracing for all individuals who tested positive for COVID-19. NDDoH, NDDPI and LPHUs worked collaboratively to assist K-12 schools and Tribal schools in the contact tracing efforts. The State and local agencies also collaborated to provide guidance for quarantine and mask use; the quarantine guidance was updated to provide exception for close contacts who were wearing masks. When the positive case and the close contact have both been wearing a face covering consistently and correctly for the entire time, the close contact did not need to self-quarantine at home. This allowed 24,641 mask-to-mask contacts to remain in school for in-person learning vs. having to quarantine at home for lengthy periods of time.</i>
Diagnostic and screening testing	<i>The ND Department of Emergency Services and the NDDoH developed a plan/strategy for promoting a BinaxNow screening model. K-12 schools interested in offering the screening on-site completed a checklist that showed what the schools had to do on their end to be approved. Once the checklist was completed the on-site or video conference training was scheduled. Initially, most of the training was done by ND's National Guard partners. Later into the program, the NDDoH also provided training. The first pilot projects with local public health support were done in November. In December approximately 20 schools began independent screening programs. Then in mid-January, following some security enhancements to the software systems (Dynamics), The outreach team was able to start to bring on any schools that were interested and willing to implement the program.</i> <i>A summary of other things that went into setting up the program included:</i> <i>• Assessment of school needs</i> <i>• Assessment of school, local, and state resources</i>

Mitigation strategy	SEA response
	• <i>Assessment of federal and state legal implications/barriers</i> • <i>State Health Officer orders</i> • <i>Definition of processes and procedures</i> • <i>School criteria and responsibilities</i> • <i>Safety</i> • <i>Ordering</i> • <i>Reporting</i> • <i>Training of staff</i> • <i>Monitoring of screening results and contact tracing</i>
Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible	<i>When the vaccines first became available in ND, vaccine priority groups were established. Employees of preschools and K-12 schools were in Phase 1B. NDDPI worked together with NDDoH and ND United Teachers' Union and LEAs to communicate with educators about the vaccination phases, as soon as the vaccines were available to them. Educational staff were encouraged to get vaccinated. A COVID Vaccine Locator was developed by the NDDOH to assist individuals in identifying vaccine availability near them. A vaccine video resource library was developed and included resources/videos on a variety of topics including: COVID-19 updates and information on what professionals need to know, info. on the efficacy of Pfizer and Moderna Vaccines in clinical trials, etc. A website was also created on Testing and Care. This site included testing locations, community test results, information on rapid antigen screening for K-12, Private, and Tribal Schools (for faculty only). Weekly reports provided to NDDPI and HRTL team from NDDoH on the number of teachers and staff vaccinated in each school building.</i>
Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies	<i>The ND Human Services awarded funding to support the state's behavioral health response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Human Services' Behavioral Health Division created a website the included information on taking care of mental health, mental health treatment services, assistance with finding resources, and information for educators. The NDDPI Office of Special Education developed a website designed to share information to help schools, educators, students, parents and caregivers. The site addressed topics such as: school reentry</i>

Mitigation strategy	SEA response
	<i>considerations for special education; implementation guidance (e.g., altered face mask guidance); parent guidance and resources.</i> <i>Weekly calls were held with NDDPI Special Education Office and local special education unit directors.</i>

- ii. Any Statewide plans, policies, estimated timelines, and specific milestones related to reopening and operation of school facilities, including any mechanisms the SEA will use to track, monitor, or enforce their implementation;

The Healthy Return to Learning Smart School Response Guidance.

Each of the 482 school buildings was required to identify their COVID 19 Point of Contact.

Our initial, early determination that mask to mask contact with a positive case did not require the contact to stay home, but rather, to self-monitor, social distance, and remain masked while in school was crucial to maintaining in person attendance and did not result in disease spread. The contact tracers kept track of all such incidents and worked with the school contacts to manage them.

The Healthy Return to Learning Team conducted listening sessions with schools that were being impacted heavily in their communities, and with schools that were suffering relatively few effects. We compiled the experiences and strategies being reported and shared them among all our schools via electronic town halls and follow-up briefing emails.

Development of the insightsnd.gov dashboard to track learning models and student attendance.

- iii. To what extent the SEA and its LEAs consult with Federal, State, and local health officials. This description should include, if available, whether the SEA and its LEAs have received support for screening testing from their State or local health department based on funding awarded by the CDC; and

Our partners in the State Health Department kept in frequent contact with CDC and HHS as our policies and their directives evolved. The idea to equate mask use with altered quarantine requirements came directly from Dr. Redfield, the then-Director of CDC. Additionally, we sponsored CDC scientists to deliver content to our schools via the electronic town hall.

All schools who opted in to the Binax testing program received funding and implementation assistance from the State Dept. of Health, the National Guard, and the Dept. of Public Instruction. The Superintendent of the Dept. of Public Instruction took on the role of supervisor for the CLIA waiver.

- iv. Any guidance, professional learning, and technical assistance opportunities the SEA will make available to its LEAs.

The NDDPI is encouraging and supporting efforts of LEAs to adopt and commit to five principles to guide their spending; including development of and commitment to a multi-year spending plan.

- Multi-year Spending Plan - This will help them avoid recurring costs and a financial cliff in 2024. It will also help LEAs maintain a long-term financial forecast. For example:
 - i. LEAs should plan to spend 40% of funds in the 21-22 school year to expand, scale out and serve more students with proven programs and strategies existing in their schools. Enroll more students in summer learning; hire more instructional coaches and high impact tutors to serve more students, open and staff more out-of-school time programs in more of your schools to serve more students. This will meet the most immediate needs of accelerated learning recovery with proven programs.
 - ii. LEAs should plant to spend 30% of funds in the SY22-23 school year to explore ideas, programs and innovations they believe may provide high impact results but they never had funds to explore before.
 - iii. SY23-24 20% of funding should be used to maintain the proven programs and serve the remaining needs of learning recovery.
 - iv. SY24-25 10% of funding should be used to supplement state and other federal funding sources to maintain effective programs
- Seek **targeted investments** to **increase learning time** for students who need it most
- Identify and report how **equitably** funds are distributed across **all schools** in a district.
- Honor the promise to taxpayers to focus on students and relief
- Be transparent and ensure broad participation in spending decisions
 - i. Engage parents, students, communities and especially boards on spending choices
 - ii. Have building principals gauge whether investments match students' needs with feasibility of success
 - iii. Apply proper procurement protocols
 - iv. Publicly **communicate** all investments, providers and intended benefits

Evaluation of and Implementing Accelerated Learning Recovery

The NDDPI has made the Priority Standards tool and training available to SEAs free of charge to evaluate learning loss and to implement strategies to address them. This is being offered through the curriculum specialists at the Regional Educational Cooperatives, and is in two parts: the first is a short term, simplified offering to assist the schools this year in evaluating and implementing a smaller number of strategies, and to get them up and running. Second will be a longer term (one to two years) implementation of a more complete and extensive program. Webinars and town halls have been held already with the schools who opted in, covering these areas of implementation:

- Supporting new teachers
- Transferring the ELA and Math strategies to also support Science teachers
- Beginning this work with staff this summer
- Revising existing curriculum guides to include the priority standards
- The transition to standards-based report cards
- How this work plays into choosing new curriculum resources
- How the priority standards can support transient students
- Planning 2021-2022 professional development

As stated above, this work will continue into the next school year and beyond.

Access to High-Quality Professional Learning via LINCspring: The NDDPI is committed to the continued growth and support of North Dakota educators. The NDDPI contracted with Cognia™ to provide all North Dakota educators access to high quality, proven professional learning content, practical resources, and coaching support via the online coaching and professional learning platform, LINCspring.

LINCspring provides online access to expert coaches, over 65 asynchronous learning modules, and dozens of real-time learning events to support teachers in the development of high-quality blended, remote, and hybrid learning experiences. By providing statewide access, NDDPI ensures equitable support of teaching and learning. These resources provide educators with personalized, immediate, ongoing, and on-demand support for improving instruction.

Online workshops and e-learning modules support the work of teachers, principals, district leaders, coaches, and regional education associations as they collaborate to develop equitable classrooms with student-centered learning.

Webinars, Trainings, and Legislation: The NDDPI has been conducting ongoing webinars and convenings with educators to explore issues such as addressing learning loss, best practices in utilizing ESSER funding, etc. In addition, the NDDPI has been partnering with legislators on ways to enhance and incentivize best practices by [codifying in law](#) a report requirement which states that school districts receiving funds will report to NDDPI information regarding learning losses of students identified within the district, including subgroup gaps; school district plans to accelerate learning recovery for all students, including closing subgroup gaps; uses of funds; and the impact expenditures had on accelerating the learning recovery for the districts' students. The first school district report must be submitted to the superintendent of public instruction by December 1, 2021.

- Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plans: Describe how the SEA will ensure that its LEAs that receive ARP ESSER funds meet the requirements in section 2001(i) of the ARP Act and the requirements relating to the ARP ESSER funds published in the Federal Register and available at <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/american-rescue-plan/american-rescue-plan-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief/> (ARP ESSER requirements) to either: (a) within 30 days of receipt of the funds, develop and make publicly available on the LEA's website a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services, or (b) have developed and made publicly available

on the LEA’s website such a plan that meets statutory requirements before the enactment of the ARP Act, including:

- i. How the SEA will ensure that each LEA plan includes, or will be modified to include, the extent to which it has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the strategies listed in table B1;
- ii. How the SEA will ensure that each LEA plan describes how it will ensure continuity of services including but not limited to services to address the students’ academic needs, and students’ and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services;
- iii. How the SEA will ensure that the LEA periodically reviews, no less frequently than every six months for the duration of the ARP ESSER grant period (i.e., through September 30, 2023),² and revises as appropriate, its plan, and how the SEA will ensure that the LEA seeks public input, and takes such input into account on (1) whether revisions are necessary and, if so, (2) the revisions to the plan; and
- iv. Describe, to the extent the SEA collects it, information about LEA implementation, to the greatest extent practicable, of each element of the most up-to-date CDC guidance listed in table B1 and its LEAs’ needs for support and technical assistance to implement strategies consistent, to the greatest extent practicable, with relevant CDC guidance.

The NDDPI has been providing training and information to LEAs on the requirements outlined in the ARP since before it was even enacted by President Biden on March 11, 2021. We have used multiple strategies, as outlined below, to inform LEAs about the “Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan” requirements.

COVID Funding Training Series

The NDDPI is conducting a “COVID Funding Training Series”, which highlights the key provisions within law. These training series will continue throughout the summer. Following each training the recording and PowerPoint are posted on our website for those educators who were unable to attend. The training schedule is available [here](#). Many of these trainings have discussed the requirement regarding the “Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services” plan.

Frequent Communication

The NDDPI publishes a “Weekly Blast” that shares key information with North Dakota educators. Each week, from the inception of the pandemic on March 2020, this weekly communication shared key information and updates regarding ESSER funding. This communication has a broad audience and was an opportunity to share crucial ESSER information with the field. Frequent reminders regarding the “Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services” plan requirements are published.

² ARP ESSER funds are subject to the Tydings amendment in section 421(b) of the General Education Provisions Act, 20 U.S.C. 1225(b), and are therefore available to SEAs and LEAs for obligation through September 30, 2024. Review and revisions of these plans, if necessary, are not required during the Tydings period.

ESSER II/III Application/Guidance

The ESSER III LEA application requires districts to complete a narrative outlining how they will meet the requirements for the plan. Trainings were held to go through the application. The trainings and guidance reiterated the importance of addressing the requirement to have their “Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services” plan posted within thirty days of receiving their ESSER III funds.

Statewide Convening

On June 3, 2021, the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders, in collaboration with the NDDPI and the ND School Boards Association, held a statewide convening to discuss ESSER requirements and brainstorm ideas on the potential use of ESSER funding. This convening had close to 100% participation from all North Dakota school districts. Each district was required to send a team consisting of the superintendent, business manager, and school board president. This convening was an opportunity to discuss the requirement for all districts to have a “Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services” plan posted on their website.

ESSER Monitoring

The NDDPI recognizes that there are a multitude of state and federal regulations that LEAs must adhere to regarding the ESSER II and III funding. With that in mind, we have created a multi-layered monitoring process with regard to the ESSER requirements. The NDDPI intends to contract with three to four individuals experienced in K12 education to conduct ESSER desk monitoring. Part of the ESSER monitoring will include a review of how districts engaged their stakeholders on the development of their “Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services” plan.

The following guidance was shared with LEAs on multiple occasions:

Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan

Section 2001(i) of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) requires all LEAs receiving ARP ESSER funds, within thirty days of receiving the funds, to make publicly available on its website a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. Before making the plan publicly available, the LEA must seek public comment on the plan and take such input into consideration.

Due Date

- The NDDPI made the ESSER III funds available to LEAs by May 24, 2021, which means they have access to their signed grant award/contract. Therefore, thirty days from May 24 is the deadline by which all districts must have their plan posted on their website, which is June 24, 2021.

The Plan must Address the Following

- Describes how the LEA will ensure continuity of services
- Addresses the students’ academic needs, and students and staff social emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services

- Describe the extent to which the LEA has adopted policies and description of any such policies on each of the strategies listed below:
 - Universal and correct wearing of masks
 - Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)
 - Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
 - Cleaning and maintain healthy facilities, including improving ventilation.
 - Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine e, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments
 - Diagnostic and screening testing
 - Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible
 - Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies

Additional Requirement

- Districts need to update the In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan at least every six months through September 20, 2024, and must seek ongoing public input on the plan.
- Even if districts claim all of their ESSER III funding, the requirement to update this plan every six months still applies.

The NDDPI believes that all of the actions taken that we have just outlined clearly demonstrate how we will ensure LEAs receiving ARP funds meet the requirements in section 2001(i) of the ARP Act.

C. Planning for the Use and Coordination of ARP ESSER Funds

The Department recognizes that seeking input from diverse stakeholders is essential to developing plans for the use of ARP ESSER funds that are responsive to the needs of students, families, and educators. In this section, SEAs will describe their plans for consultation and for coordinating the use of ARP ESSER funds with other resources to meet the needs of students.

- SEA Consultation: Consistent with the ARP ESSER requirements, describe how the SEA engaged in meaningful consultation with stakeholders, and incorporated input into its plan, including, but not limited to:
 - i. students;
 - ii. families;
 - iii. Tribes (if applicable);
 - iv. civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations);

- v. school and district administrators (including special education administrators);
- vi. superintendents;
- vii. charter school leaders (if applicable);
- viii. teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions; and
- ix. stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students.

The description must include how the SEA provided the public the opportunity to provide input in the development of the plan, a summary of the input (including any letters of support), and how the SEA took such input into account.

From the beginning of the pandemic, North Dakota has maintained a strong focus on collaboration and consultation with many stakeholder groups. Listed below is a summary of some of the various groups we collaborated with to get input:

Accelerated Learning Recovery: On Thursday, February 11, 2021, a group of approximately forty stakeholders representing various educational institutions convened to discuss proposals that were collected as part of a legislative request to accelerate learning recovery. Representatives from various offices within the NDDPI facilitated group conversations to solicit feedback on the learning recovery proposals, as well as garner additional ideas. Then, those ideas were shared with the state legislature. The NDDPI posted the ideas that were shared [here](#) as a resource for school districts to use as they strategically plan for the upcoming school year and additional funding opportunities. Districts should make local decisions about how best to help students with accelerating learning recovery, but this document can provide recommendations to assist districts in making those decisions.

Children Who are Incarcerated: ND has only one state agency for children who are incarcerated, with is the Youth Correctional Center (YCC) located in Mandan, ND. NDDPI meets regularly with YCC leadership to determine needs, and NDDPI monitors YCC for Title I, Part D program compliance. In addition, the YCC team is also part of the North Dakota Personalized, Competency-Based Learning initiative, and stakeholders have been actively participating in activities virtually throughout the pandemic, sharing innovative approaches and engaging in new ways to offer services to all children. In addition, NDDPI has representatives that actively serve on the Juvenile Justice Commission, Juvenile Justice Advisory Group, and the Children’s Cabinet. The information gleaned from these advisory groups is factored into funding conversations, as the NDDPI determines need. Both the pandemic and the statewide mission has affected the numbers of students incarcerated in the facility. More efforts are being made to support students in prevention and support outside of incarceration, so the numbers this past year dropped drastically, cutting the census in half. Therefore, the leaders have had to be creative with how to continue meeting students’ needs while making significant changes to their overall educational structure. NDDPI, in seeking feedback, is waiting on a proposal that more specifically highlights the need, in order to determine the best way to support them through these funds and other opportunities.

Civil Rights Organizations: Monthly TA calls with Parent Support and Advocacy Groups have been held since March 2020 through the present day. During these calls, the ESSER and ARP Funds are discussed, needs identified, and ideas solicited for use of the funds. The individuals within these groups included and or represented individuals of diverse races, diverse family composition, and disabilities (Section 504 and IDEA). The Office of Special Education IDEA Advisory Committee and Secondary Transition Community of Practice Advisory Committee have also been involved in discussions and the generating of ideas based on needs for the use of the ESSER III funds regarding the impact of the COVID-19. Both of these groups represent Tribal administrators, Native American families, families of children and youth with disabilities and school district administrators. Some of the school district administrators serve as the Section 504 and the TITLE IX coordinators, thus resulting in input from that group of constituents as well.

Consultation with Title IX Coordinators has been done through email and information being sent to them through the weekly Blast. Information has been sent out to the Title IX coordinators (BLAST) on Title IX regulations and guidance and have also been in communication with them through email.

Annually, the NDDPI Child Nutrition and Food Distribution programs office conducts Civil Rights training for all local agencies administering USDA Child Nutrition and Food Distribution programs statewide. This training was held during COVID-19 and addressed relevant issues and obtained feedback. Local agencies are required to provide Civil Rights training to all program employees and volunteers.

Distinguished Educator Workgroup: The NDDPI created a Distinguished Educator workgroup comprised of former ND Teachers of the Year, past nominees, and Education association heads. Topics brainstormed were: Building Relationships with Students; Attendance, Participation and Engagement; Grading and Assessment; Transition from In-person to Distance Learning; Communication Practices; Lesson Delivery; Supporting Students in Special Populations; Staff Mental Health; and Student Mental Health. Over several days the group explored each subject and created detailed guidance for the field based on of experience and trial and error. The final product was marketed and distributed on social media, email, and virtual conferences. This group continues to meet with Superintendent Baesler and NDDPI staff on a monthly basis for consultation.

Foster Care Children and Youth: NDDPI engages with Foster Care Children and Youth in multiple avenues, all of which continued meeting virtually during the pandemic. The ND Foster Care Liaison attended statewide convenings such as the Foster Care Case Managers monthly meeting, hosted by the Department of Human Services, and the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group to represent Foster Care Liaisons and, therefore, foster care students across the state. In addition, the information gleaned from these advisory groups is also shared back with the Foster Care liaisons in the field. During this time, regular webinars were held to share information and provide feedback. The NDDPI also hosts a Microsoft Teams Site, where resources can be shared, questions can be asked and answered, and discussions can occur, facilitated by the ND Foster Care Liaison. Finally, the NDDPI was able to virtually monitor selected sites for Foster Care program compliance. During this time, a Juvenile Justice bill was overhauled by the ND 67th Legislative Assembly, to better provide services to children and youth. The stakeholder groups served to keep our ND Foster Care Liaison

informed of policy changes that were affected by either the pandemic and/or new legislative mandates. Foster Care children and youth fared similarly as all students during this time of disruption; however, similar to the homeless program, liaisons struggled to provide an adequate amount of support, as resources and personnel were stretched thin. However, the state as a whole, in its “work as one” approach really stepped-up services during this time so, in many ways, services have been expanded.

Homeless Children and Youth: NDDPI engages with stakeholders around Homeless Children and Youth in multiple avenues, all of which continued to meet virtually during the pandemic. The ND Homeless Coordinator and other NDDPI staff attended statewide convenings such as the Interagency Council on Homelessness, the Interagency Coordinating Council, the Behavioral Health Planning Council, and the Juvenile Justice Commission and the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group to represent Homeless Liaisons and, therefore, homeless students across the state. In addition, information gleaned from these advisory groups is also shared back with the Homeless liaisons in the field. In addition, there was a small work group entitled Education Leads Home, that served to link Early Childhood to Higher Education through mentorships and partnership. During this time, quarterly webinars were held to share information and provide a forum for feedback. The NDDPI also hosts a Microsoft Teams Site, where resources can be shared, questions can be asked and answered, and discussions can occur, facilitated by the ND Homeless Coordinator. Finally, the NDDPI was able to virtually monitor selected sites for Homeless Education program compliance. Throughout all of these different outlets, a picture of youth homelessness in ND during the pandemic emerged: it was clear that liaisons were struggling to identify students who exhibit homelessness in different ways due to school being held at a distance or hybrid. Oftentimes, liaisons were pulled in several directions to help all at-risk students, and it became more difficult to identify homeless students. However, as the economy was disrupted, there were more housing issues. However, on a positive note, the schools felt that there were resources to support students with technology and transportation, but most felt that there were many students who might be homeless or unaccompanied, and not identified. NDDPI has factored this input into both ESSER and ARP Homeless I and II funding conversations, as it continues to develop plans to support schools in educating homeless children and youth.

Migrant Education: Migrant Education stakeholders were included with weekly ESSER updates through ‘The Blast’ publication sent out through email, weekly. Information received from OME is also shared with migrant stakeholders and their feedback is requested. This spring, before summer programs began, the NDDPI contacted every school to determine their needs so we can provide services during the summer. Flyers and communication from recruiters and LEAs helped students and parents learn of the choices and supports being offered to address learning loss. Since North Dakota is a summer only Migrant Program, input during our COVID-19 year was obtained through phone calls, emails, and through virtual trainings to stakeholders during the regular school year. Ongoing phone calls, emails, and trainings were conducted with our summer migrant coordinators and staff. Our trained

state regional coordinator was able to personally address any needs and provide guidance through face-to-face visits. Questions or concerns fielded to the migrant administrator/migrant staff were promptly addressed.

ND Tribal Consultation: ESSA represents a unique opportunity to increase equity and access for children as LEAs and SEAs consult with Indian Tribes on issues affecting Native American students. NDDPI has had meaningful consultation with the all four Tribal Nations operating schools that share North Dakota's borders since ESSA was enacted and we continue to travel to these sovereign nations to meet every year with the each of the four Tribal Chairs and their Councils to address the needs of our Native American students, families and communities in ND. Additionally, Superintendent Baesler and the ND Indian Affairs Commissioner convene the North Dakota Indian Education Advisory Council on a quarterly basis. This council is legislatively created and includes tribal leaders and education leaders from all 4 of North Dakota's tribal nations. SB 2306 passed in the ND legislature in 2021 requires the teaching of Native American history and all five of North Dakota's sovereign nations in elementary, middle, and high school. The NDDPI is partnering with the National Indian Education Association and other regional stakeholders to build upon the North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings (NDNAEU) resources for educators.

The office of Indian/Multicultural sent out an annual Native American Needs Assessment survey to ND Tribal schools requesting feedback on areas of need. The Native American Action Plan includes areas of need identified by the Native American Survey, the areas of need include; Culturally Responsive resources to support Native student learning and success, Promoting Social-Emotional Learning, Using Equitable Instructional Practices and Engaging with Native American Families and Community.

Tribal Consultation: NDDPI conducts yearly Tribal Consultation with the Tribal Nations in North Dakota. This is a unique opportunity to increase equity and access for children as LEA's and SEA's consult with the ND Indian Tribes on issues affecting Native American students. Section 8538 of ESSA requires affected LEAs to consult with Indian tribes located in the area served by the LEA on covered programs and their ESSER funds. The act requires tribal consultation to be timely, and meaningful. LEAs submit a Confirmation of Tribal Consultation to NDDPI.

North Dakota United: North Dakota United is the statewide, professional union of more than 11,500 educators and public employees. The NDDPI communicated with all North Dakota teachers over the past year to keep educators abreast of COVID-related activities and resources. We gathered input from the past and present "Teacher of the Year" regarding the use of ESESR funding. In addition, the NDDPI met individually with the NDU president and executive director to solicit feedback and input.

Special Education: Since the conception of the pandemic the NDDPI Office of Special Education has hosted monthly Technical Assistance virtual meetings with the local special education unit administrative personnel. These monthly calls have consisted of guidance and discussion around meeting the needs of students with disabilities during these unprecedented times when a child's learning environment may have had to be adjusted.

The Office of Special Education has consistently and continuously recommended open communication to parents of children with disabilities. The Office of Special Education has also hosted monthly calls with the Parent Support and Advocacy Groups within the State. These virtual calls provided a bridge between the local special education units and the support personnel that consult and advocate for families of children with disabilities.

English Learner Program Advisory Committee (ELPAC): The 2005 legislative assembly established that the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall appoint an advisory committee to assist with programming for English learners (ELs). This committee is made up of stakeholders in various roles relating to the education of English learners. Throughout the pandemic, the Office of Indian/Multicultural Education reached out to this group through virtual meetings and direct emails to request feedback on the challenges schools and families with English learners were facing and remedies found to be effective. Recently, the NDDPI sent a survey to this committee requesting feedback on what they felt would be the most effective use of state level COVID-related educational funding. The feedback was targeted toward English learners and included suggestions like additional intervention staff, training for teachers and paraprofessionals, curriculum support, and technology.

Family Engagement: The NDDPI engaged with several stakeholders including families through the State Superintendent's Family Engagement Cabinet which consist of a diverse group of stakeholders throughout ND. The purpose of the State Superintendent's Family Engagement Cabinet is to provide a safe space that allows members from all over the state to share their experience as a parent, guardian, grandparent or caretaker in North Dakota with State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Kirsten Baesler. The Cabinet shares advice, ideas, and opinions about how North Dakota families and schools can better work together to support the education of all children.

Family Engagement Cabinet meetings are held in Bismarck at least quarterly, and may also include virtual meetings throughout the year as needed to provide guidance to the Superintendent. Cabinet members work collaboratively with each other, ND Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) staff, and outside partners as needed, and express views and opinions openly and constructively. The Cabinet assists NDDPI in facilitating partnerships and collaboration with families and schools. During COVID 19 the Family Engagement Cabinet met virtually with Superintendent Baesler on a weekly basis through June 2020 and monthly during the 2021-2022 school year. Since it's inception in May 2019, the Family Engagement Cabinet has accomplished significant goals. During the first term and in the midst of a global pandemic they created the [Family Resource Kit](#) full of crisis interventions, social-emotional/behavioral health, and local family resources; educational resources for distance learning; common ND distance learning platform tutorials; and distance learning tips, tricks, and scheduling.

A PK-12 Alliance group resulted from the Family Engagement Cabinet work. The newly developed K-12 Alliance provided unified messaging and support for family educators and students during this unprecedented time. Creation of the PreK-12 Alliance occurred in April 2020

- The PreK-12 Alliance is a team of family members, educators, and community leaders formed to build better, more responsive relationships between families and educators to support each PK-12 learner's success.
- The PreK-12 Alliance created the [Family Partnership Strategy Playbook](https://a633434a-8c4b-4ae1-91a4-673ee5f3be53.filesusr.com/ugd/fbcfbd_8e0fe8eac42b4585815f036140401d5f.pdf) https://a633434a-8c4b-4ae1-91a4-673ee5f3be53.filesusr.com/ugd/fbcfbd_8e0fe8eac42b4585815f036140401d5f.pdf
- The PK-12 Alliance, in partnership with NDDPI and the Center for Innovation in Education, established the North Dakota Family Partnership Project. The Stanford d.School design process was used with Community teams to generate strategies to solve a local problem from the work in the Family Partnership Strategy Playbook. Initially the work was planned to accommodate 8 community teams but because of an abundance of community team applications the work was expanded to include XX teams.
- The PK-12 Alliance also held a series of 4 live Coffee Chat events to discuss the strategies in the Playbook with educators and families

Superintendent’s Administrators’ Cabinets: State Superintendent Baesler meets monthly with a group of elementary principals, a group of secondary principals, and a group of local superintendents to gather insight and opinions on a multitude of issues including ESSER funding uses.

Student Cabinet: The State Superintendent’s Student Cabinet provides a forum for North Dakota students from different grade levels, backgrounds, cultures, school size, and areas within North Dakota. The Cabinet, which includes students in grades 3-12 from both public and non-public schools, provides Superintendent Kirsten Baesler with feedback and opinions on how to improve North Dakota’s schools and state education policy. Throughout the pandemic Superintendent Baesler sought input from Cabinet members on their schools’ instructional format, challenges for students and families, and other issues as they arose. This input provided the NDDPI with a valuable perspective for decision-making. Recently, the Cabinet was surveyed to gather their thoughts on how the State should use the COVID-related funding. The students had a variety of ideas including school lunches, textbooks, mental health, academic loss, additional staff, technology, and enrichment programs.

Statewide Convening: On June 3, 2021, the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders, in collaboration with the NDDPI and the ND School Boards Association, held a statewide convening to discuss the ESSER requirements and brainstorm ideas on the potential use of the ESSER funding. This convening had close to 100% participation from all North Dakota school districts. Each district was required to send a team consisting of the superintendent, business manager, and school board president. This convening was an opportunity for consultation and to discuss coordinating use of ARP ESSER funds.

- **Coordinating Funds:** Describe to what extent the SEA has and will coordinate Federal COVID-19 pandemic funding and other Federal funding. This description must include:
 - i. How the SEA and its LEAs 1) are using or have used prior to the submission of this plan and 2) plan to use following submission of this plan, Federal COVID-19 funding under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (“CARES”) Act and the CRRSA Act to support a safe return to and safely maximize in-person instruction, sustain these

operations safely, and address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individual student groups (including students from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, racial or ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students);

Complete the table below or provide a narrative description.

NDDPI shared investment of ESSER funding with COVID funding provided to NDDoH to create and staff the Healthy Return to Learning Team.

ESSER funding was used in conjunction with other federal funding provided to NDDoH, NDDes, ND National Guard and NDDHS to coordinate contact tracing and rapid testing in K12 schools.

NDDPI collaborated directly the ND Governor's Office on several key strategies to support a safe return to learning and address barrier created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically:

ND Exact Path: NDDPI and the ND Governor's Office partnered to ensure all schools had the tools they needed to address student learning and the missed learning opportunities or gaps that may have occurred due to COVID-19 disruptions; part of their strategy was to offer Edmentum's Exact Path to all North Dakota K-12 students. Schools and districts across the state have access to use this reading, writing and mathematics tool to help students catch up, fill in learning gaps or even provide next level challenges – really providing precision learning for ND students. The online tool combines adaptive diagnostics with individualized instruction and learning paths for K-12 students. North Dakota Exact Path supports a variety of learning environments – at home with families, in the classroom face to face, hybrid and distance learning scenarios. Not only did both state entities share financial investment in this program (ESSER I: \$600,000 and GEER I: \$600,000) but the Governor and State Superintendent collaboratively messaged this support for families, students, educators, schools and districts across the state.

Teacher Pathway Programs: NDDPI and the ND Governor's Office partnered with a university to provide grants for supporting pathways to become teachers: Resident Teacher Program, Para-to-Teacher Pathway Program, Speech Pathologist Paraprofessional Scholarships, and Traineeship Scholarship Program. All of these programs enable pre-service and practicing teachers to enhance their skills and qualifications as a special education teacher or a related service provider. These program directly address the looming issue of qualified educators in our classroom and serves as a recruitment strategy to address upcoming vacancies, which we predict will be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

GEER I: Although not a shared investment, NDDPI staff dedicated time to collaborating with the ND Governor's Office regarding the rollout and implementation of their GEER I program. The GEER program provided the opportunity for the ND Governor's Office to directly oversee and manage a grant to schools and districts across North Dakota. This was new work for their office and many of their collaborating cabinet agencies (i.e., Office of Management and Budget). NDDPI staff were instrumental in thought partnering on the LEA grant application, review, payment structures, grant awards, LEA recruitment and

communications. Additionally, NDDPI staff have provided guidance on requirements such as Maintenance of Effort and FFATA reporting.

EANS I: Although not a shared investment, ND Governor’s Office staff and NDDPI staff dedicated substantial time on the SEA application logistics, SEA assurances, program structures and school supports for the Emergency Services to Nonpublic Schools (EANS I) program. This included consultation meetings with the ND Governor’s Office, NDDPI and the nonpublic schools organization; ND Governor’s Office, NDDPI, and Office of Management and Budget as well as numerous strategic planning and logistical operations meetings.

Table C1.

Funding source	Prior/current SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)	Planned SEA and LEA uses (including funding amounts, if applicable)
ESSER I (CARES Act)	<i>SEE ABOVE</i>	
GEER I (CARES Act)		
ESSER II (CRRSA Act)		<i>NDDPI will partner with NDDHS to fund quality educational experiences for 0-5 year olds in childcare and preschool settings. (\$5 million) NDDPI will partner with four key LEAs to conduct equity audits to provide a statewide roadmap for equity work. \$500,000</i>
GEER II (CRRSA Act)		

- ii. To what extent ESSER I and ESSER II funds have been awarded to LEAs and, if funds have not yet been made available to LEAs, when they will be. In addition, please provide any available information on the total dollar amounts of ESSER I and ESSER II funds that have been obligated but not expended by the SEA and its LEAs, including whether the SEA is able to track LEA obligations.

The NDDPI has outlined the status of the ESSER I, II, and III funding below.

- ESSER I – The NDDPI has awarded 100% of the ESSER I funding to LEAs. Many districts have spent and collected all of their ESSER I funding. The department’s grants management system, WebGrants, requires all LEAs to upload a copy of their local accounting ledger and copies of supporting documentation (i.e. invoices/receipts) each time they submit a reimbursement claim. This will allow NDDPI staff to monitor and review expenditures to ensure the allowability of all activities and purchases made with ESSER funds.
- ESSER II – The NDDPI began providing information and support to our LEAs shortly after the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act 2021 (CRRSA) was signed into law on December 27, 2020. We held our first training for LEAs in January 2021 to provide a summary of the new law and the

implications for districts. On May 3, 2021, the NDDPI held specific training to outline the process for districts to apply for ESSER II funding. Immediately following the trainings, districts could begin to apply for the ESSER II funding. The NDDPI created a quick, streamlined process for school districts to access the ESSER II funding. North Dakota districts intending to apply for the ESSER II funding need to complete and submit the Certification and Agreement package consisting of Parts A-E. Therefore, for those districts that already received significant stakeholder input, they were able to submit their application. The North Dakota legislature did not approve or release the funds until April 29, 2021.

A statewide ESSER convening was held on June 3, 2021. Districts sent a team consisting of the superintendent, business manager, and school board president to the training to learn about the key provisions in the law. To support this effort, the NDDPI set the final deadline to submit an ESSER II application to June 30, 2021. The deadline allowed districts who needed more time to get stakeholder input the ability to do so. Districts will use the department's WebGrants system to access the funding on a reimbursement basis.

- ESSER III - The North Dakota legislature did not approve or release the funds until April 29, 2021. The NDDPI began the work of supporting our school districts in developing their plans for the use of ARP ESSER funds since the bill was enacted by President Biden on March 11, 2021. We held our first training on March 25, 2021, outlining the ARP requirements so districts could begin the planning process. We have held multiple trainings to share ideas and resources, particularly on the various requirements in the law, including the required 20% set-aside for learning loss, using ESSER funds for construction or renovation projects, visualizing unfinished learning, and understanding the ESSER monitoring requirements. We held a training on May 17, 2021, to outline the process of applying for ESSER III funding. Due to the federal timeline requirements, North Dakota implemented a two-phased process for districts to apply for ESSER III funding.

In Phase I: Districts will submit an "Initial Application" and receive two-thirds of the ESSER III funding. All North Dakota school districts received their grant award and had access to the ESSER III funding as of May 24, 2021.

In Phase II: Districts will submit an ESSER III supplemental application. Once approved, districts will receive the remaining one-third of their ESSER III funding. The deadline to submit a supplemental ESSER III application is August 17, 2021.

- i. In supporting LEAs as they plan for the safe return to and continuity of in-person instruction and for meeting the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the extent to which the SEA is also using other Federal funding sources

including but not limited to under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (“ESEA”), IDEA, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (“WIOA”), funding for child nutrition services, and McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and the funds to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness provided by section 2001(b)(1) of the ARP Act.³

The NDDPI has a small state agency staff. While this does pose some capacity issues, it also allows for stronger department-wide collaboration. We have monthly director meetings to collaborate and share ways that we can partner, braid funding, and work together on joint initiatives. A variety of other federal funding sources besides just ESSER dollars are being used to support learning loss and meet the academic, social emotional, and mental health needs of our K-12 students.

The NDDPI operates on an annual budgeting process. Each spring the Office Directors prepare a budget request. This request lays out the items that they need to administer the programs they have in their office as well as any optional initiatives they would like to pursue for the year. Their request also includes all the possible funding sources that can be used to operate their office. The Management Team then reviews all the requests, approves the final budgets, and allocates all of the available agency funding to the offices to fund their budget.

NDDPI is partnering with NDDHS on the **Behavioral Health in Education: Resources and Opportunities (B-HERO) Technical Assistance Center**: In North Dakota’s 2019 Legislative Session, public school buildings state-wide were required to designate one school staff member as the Behavioral Health Resource Coordinator (BHRC). Separate legislation required ND Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide the 315 unique BHRCs throughout the state with materials and resources related to supporting behavioral health needs. In December 2020, the Behavioral Health in Education: Resources and Opportunities (B-HERO) Technical Assistance Center was established. Phase 1 of development includes dissemination of weekly resources for ND BHRCs targeting a variety of school community stakeholders. Phase 2 will include development and facilitation of training. Phase 3 will develop a community of practice for BHRCs to share successes and perceived barriers to supporting behavioral health needs within their school communities.

The NDDPI partners with NDDHS on P-EBT and summer food programming for child nutrition needs.

The NDDPI will partner with Regional Education Associations and LEAs to expand 21st Century grants to more communities.

³ Please note that the needs of students experiencing homelessness must be addressed (along with the other groups disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic) through the use of the ARP ESSER SEA reservations and the required LEA reservation for the academic impact of lost instructional time; the funding provided to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness by section 2001(b)(1) of the ARP Act is in addition to the supports and services provided with ARP ESSER funds.

D. Maximizing State-Level Funds to Support Students

The Department recognizes that States have an extraordinary opportunity to address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on underserved students through the ARP Act's required State set-asides to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, provide summer learning and enrichment programs, and provide comprehensive afterschool programs. In this section, SEAs will describe their evidence-based strategies for these resources.

- Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time: Describe how the SEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(1) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 5 percent of the State's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) on evidence-based interventions to address the academic impact of lost instructional time by supporting the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs, and ensure that such interventions respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The description must include:
 - i. A description of the evidence-based interventions (e.g., providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning) the SEA has selected, and the extent to which the SEA will evaluate the impact of those interventions on an ongoing basis to understand if they are working;

The NDDPI, over the past several months, has been consulting with our stakeholders regarding how to best use our state-level ESSER funding. We have presented at numerous trainings, facilitated conversations, conducted surveys, and held a brainstorming seminar to gather input and ideas. The NDDPI will reserve at minimum, five percent of our ARP funding on interventions to address the academic impact of lost instructional time by supporting the use of evidence-based practices. This amounts to approximately \$15,263,344 in ARP funding. Although final decisions have not been confirmed, the NDDPI has identified a fairly firm list of projects we intend to fund with our set-aside dollars. A brief description of each intervention is highlighted below:

Summer School:

During the 2021 Legislative Session, a bill was heard and passed into law that allowed all North Dakota students in grades K-12 to attend state funded summer school. This is significant as in the past only K-4 students deemed as remedial could attend summer school. This flexibility and the ability to utilize ESSER funds to expand summer school can help minimize the summer slide and close widening achievement gaps – especially with the youngest and most vulnerable learners.

Fund Additional CLSD Projects:

Modeled on the federal Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant, this opportunity would fund a multi-year support of districts ready and willing to engage in systemic change to improve literacy outcomes for students at all grade levels with a focus on core literacy instruction improvement. The district would ensure to develop a literacy plan of action based on the state literacy plan and support the implementation through literacy coaching and instructor professional development. Districts will receive funding based on district size, to be expended during the period of availability.

REA Priority Standards:

The NDDPI partnered with the Healthy Return to Learning Team (ND HRTL) and the North Dakota Regional Educational Associations (NDREAs) to sponsor training webinars and technical support to all ND school districts focused on prioritizing standards to maximize the learning in classrooms, especially during the last quarter of the year when over 90% of the state was in face-to-face instruction. This project provides supports to schools and districts across ND on setting priority standards, creating instructional pacing guides, using assessment data to best utilize the time remaining in the school year to focus learning on priority skills and knowledge students will need in the future, and how to use their interim assessment data to identify priority standards that require additional support. The REA personnel provided support sessions for schools helping them apply the knowledge gained in the webinars, through summer work and in fall sessions all with the goal of focusing instruction on the key skills and knowledge students need and help accelerate their learning.

Innovation Zone Project:

The NDDPI will provide incentives, support and technical assistance to establish Innovation Zones in key LEAs. Innovation Zones are an innovative approach to address unfinished learning by blending adaptive digital/online curriculums with more traditional classroom instruction. The combination of face-to-face instruction with digital/online curriculums allow teachers to leverage technology when diagnosing student prior knowledge, differentiating, or personalizing academic paths for each student, and adjust lessons with real time information. The digital content works off interim or diagnostic assessment information, so the two need to be integrated (saving time for the classroom teacher). The instruction can be more targeted and allow for the student to take more ownership in reflection and learning. More data is available on the student and the learning, to help drive decision making. The state works as a harbor master to provide an approved list or menu of assessment, online curriculum, design/implementation, and PD providers. PD is a large part of the process, as teachers will be more effective when they understand how the tech, assessments, and their traditional instruction can be woven together to create this innovative approach.

Science of Reading Training:

Provide statewide training opportunities for all educators, administrators, and instructional coaches to learn the science of reading and how to ensure its application in the instructional setting. This wide-sweep opportunity should focus on the early instructors at K-3 with a concise introduction to the Science of Reading and beginning application. Ideally, this funding could also support a variety of opportunities for continued, embedded practice ranging from asynchronous web learning models to ongoing professional learning communities.

Exact Path:

The NDDPI partnered with the ND Governor's Office to ensure all schools had the tools they needed to address student learning and the missed learning opportunities or gaps that may have occurred due to COVID-19 disruptions; part of their strategy was to offer Edmentum's Exact Path to all North Dakota K-12 students. Schools and districts across the state have access to use this reading, writing and mathematics tool to help students catch up, fill in learning gaps or even provide next level challenges – really providing precision learning for ND students. The online tool combines adaptive diagnostics with individualized instruction and learning paths for K-12 students. North Dakota Exact Path supports a variety of learning environments – at home with families, in the classroom face to face, hybrid and distance learning scenarios.

NDDMTSS:

The NDDPI has partnered with the seven Regional Education Associations to provide funding to train and support districts with a Multi-Tiered System of Supports model. North Dakota Multi-Tiered System of Supports (NDDMTSS) is a framework to provide all students with the best opportunities to succeed academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally in school. NDDMTSS focuses on providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals. Now, more than ever, the pandemic has shined a spotlight on accelerating learning recovery and has increased the demand for this form of professional development and strategic planning. The NDDPI is hoping to expand this project by increasing statewide capacity, onboarding additional personnel to meet the increased need, and continue the evaluation work focused on student outcomes.

Best in Class: Early Learning Experience for Four-Year Olds:

The NDDPI is partnering with NDDHS to create high-quality, well-resourced classrooms for 4-year-olds through grants of \$120,000 available to public, private and religious organizations. The classroom cohort size can be no smaller than 14 students and programs must adhere to exemplar professional development and instructional strategy coaching guidelines. The NDDPI is committing a total of \$7 million for this activity to be expended during the period of availability.

Waterford Upstart:

Six hundred North Dakota families with pre-school aged children participate in the [Waterford Upstart](#) funded grant program. Beginning July 1, 2021, Waterford Upstart only

has available funding for 400 of the enrolled children and families. The demand for this program is high, especially throughout the very rural parts of the state that do not have pre-school-based opportunities. NDDPI is partnering with NDDHS to meet this demand by funding an additional 800 slots. Families will receive a computer, access to a coach, and, if needed, internet connection to participate.

Early Learning Bridge Grants:

The North Dakota Department of Human Services will partner with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction to implement this grant available for one year, July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022. This grant is intended to support existing programs formerly receiving the Dept of Commerce Early Learning program who cannot meet the minimum 14 student threshold required of the Best In Class grant. Eligible entities must provide evidence they have exhausted all consortium or regional collaborative ideas within their region. A program is eligible for a reimbursement grant for all enrolled four-year-olds qualifying for free and/or reduced lunch under the Richard B Russel National School Lunch Act. Receiving \$2,000/child that qualifies for free lunch and \$1,000/child that qualifies for reduced lunch. The eligible program must agree to incorporating the family home-based [Waterford Upstart](#) program.

Equity Audit:

The NDDPI will be partnering with the Hunt Institute to address equity in our school districts. The Hunt Institute will specifically provide ND districts the support to deepen understanding of and identify recommendations for closing performance gaps amongst subgroups of students in districts.

Achieving equity is an ongoing journey over an indeterminate time that will require the engagement of all district staff, students, and community members. North Dakota district leaders must be equipped with data to begin to understand the barriers to equity for marginalized populations within their district and determine high-impact opportunities to disrupt barriers to equity for underserved students. Through equity audits, the Hunt Institute aims to support districts to understand the extent to which their policies, practices, and behaviors either erase or exacerbate inequity.

- ii. How the evidence-based interventions will specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students, including each of the student groups listed in question A.3.i.-viii. When possible, please indicate which data sources the SEA will use to determine the impact of lost instructional time; and

In addition to the evidence-based interventions the NDDPI will be funding, as outlined in D1(i), outlined below are more evidence-based interventions we propose to fund which will specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students.

Education Pathway for High School Seniors:

If the Office of Special Education does not get funded for the project titles “Exploring Careers with Exceptional Learners” (EXCEL), the special education office would like

NDDPI to fund a project to create an educational pathway for high school students to earn dual credit in the area of education.

With a clear set of activities outlined by three goals, the Office of Special Education in collaboration with other offices in NDDPI (Indian/Multicultural Education, Academic Supports, School Approval and Opportunity, MIS and Early Learning) will create a pathway for high school students, including members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability, to gain knowledge and work experiences in the education field to increase the number of well-prepared candidates entering the teaching field. Collaboration will occur between NDDPI, the ND Department of Career and Technical Education (ND CTE), IHEs, Regional Educational Associations (REAs), LEAs, and communities so students can earn college credit in the education field while in high school. Courses will be offered to all public schools across the state (rural, urban, tribal, etc.) and will provide equitable access to all students who wish to participate. The goals of the project would be:

Goal 1: Recruit a diverse group of high school students who will obtain a degree in the special education field.

Goal 2: Increase retention rates of teachers working in the special education field.

Goal 3: Collect and analyze data to evaluate the implementation and success rates of recruitment and retention for special education personnel.

Moving the Needle – ND Graduation Improvement Project

The ‘Moving the Needle’ proposal is targeted at improving the number of students in ND who graduate Choice Ready. Up to four projects will potentially be funded at \$100,000/year for up to three consecutive years. Eligible applicants are school districts, groups of districts, REAs, universities, or other related stakeholders working closely with schools to improve graduation rates. Applicants will have flexibility to design projects that will impact local graduation rates. At the minimum, each project must clearly describe:

- a) Evidence-Based, Systemic and Targeted Graduation Improvement Strategies and Activities
- b) Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement related to the graduation process
 - i) Student engagement in the graduation process
 - ii) Family engagement in the graduation process
 - iii) Preferably community engagement in the graduation process
 - iv) Board Approval
- c) Baseline, Target, and Evaluation Data at the:
 - i) High School level
 - ii) Subgroup Level (ex: students with disabilities)
 - iii) Lowest performing subgroups (ex: Students with ED)
- d) Evaluation of Project Effectiveness

ND Early Warning System Scale Up Project

An Early Warning System, when implemented correctly, is an evidence-based process that increases the number of students graduating from high school, thereby increasing the likelihood that more students are graduating Choice Ready. ESSER funds will pay for expert technical assistance and related training costs to develop a CADRE of expert Early Warning

and Intervention System coaches in ND using existing personnel. The goal of this project will be to implement a sustainable, scalable system in a way that aligns/embeds/fits into existing or desired school processes at the high school level and improves graduation outcomes for students. (Examples of these processes include NDMTSS, EduTech Data Training, SEL Network, etc.) The total cost of the project is \$200,000.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

The utilization of NDMTSS is growing throughout ND, but it may be leading to an overidentification of students in special education, as Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports are being inputted in place of special education minutes; thus causing more students to fall behind and exacerbating the disparity. The Office of Special Education has identified that schools need to pair SDI with NDMTSS levels of intervention in order to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. The work will begin by creating an SDI Design Team consisting of diverse stakeholders who will: develop a state guidance document to define SDI and key instructional practices, identify supportive tools to serve as a resource library for educators implementing SDI and develop a school-based needs assessment for schools and educators to identify SDI gaps and opportunities to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

- iii. The extent to which the SEA will use funds it reserves to identify and engage 1) students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years; and 2) students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

North Dakota has been extremely fortunate and one of the few states where almost all of our school districts had in-person instruction for the entire 2020-2021 school year. However, there is a plan in place to identify where the most significant learning loss of students may be, including subgroup gaps. Our state legislature, in HB 1013, is requiring all school districts to submit a report to the state superintendent by December 1, 2021, and identify the learning losses of students identified within the district, including subgroup gaps; school district plans to accelerate learning recovery for all students, including closing subgroup gaps.

Districts must include the impact ESSER funds have had on accelerating learning recovery for the districts, including subgroups. Therefore, after the NDDPI has had an opportunity to review this data, we will be able to identify where gaps exist, possibly due to those students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures. Once we identify these students, the NDDPI can then target our support, assistance, and funding to where it is needed the most.

- Evidence-Based Summer Learning and Enrichment Programs: Describe how the SEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(2) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 1 percent of the State's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) for evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs, including those that begin in Summer 2021, and ensure such programs respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The description must include:

- i. A description of the evidence-based programs that address the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students (e.g., providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning) the SEA has selected, and the extent to which the SEA will evaluate the impact of those programs;

North Dakota has a robust plan to support our LEAs and provide opportunities for evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs. The NDDPI has identified multiple approaches to supporting and monitoring LEAs in their implementation of evidence-based interventions that respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs.

The NDDPI has been communicating regularly with LEAs to strongly encourage them to offer evidence-based learning and enrichment opportunities over the summer months. In addition, the NDDPI has made the following programs available to all parents and families, independent of school district action:

- Summer School: during the 2021 Legislative Session, a bill was heard and passed into law that allowed all North Dakota students in grades K-12 to attend state funded summer school. This is significant as in the past only K-4 students deemed as remedial could attend summer school. This flexibility and the ability to utilize ESSER funds to expand summer school can help minimize the summer slide and close widening achievement gaps – especially with the youngest and most vulnerable learners.
- The NDDPI has made Schoolhouse.world available to all ND schools and students. Schoolhouse.world will provide free tutoring for math (pre-algebra through calculus), SAT prep, AP prep, and college applications. Schoolhouse.world provides the opportunity for students to participate in live, small-group tutoring sessions. Tutoring can be used independently or to complement [Khan Academy](#) lessons. Small-group, high-impact tutoring is immensely effective in closing achievement gaps, and this partnership can be beneficial for students, as well as for teachers and administrators.
- The NDDPI made Exact Path available at no cost to students and families in August 2020, after the COVID-19 pandemic closed schools to in-person instruction and will continue to offer this resource throughout the next two years. Families and students had been struggling to adapt to different learning platforms being used by different grades and classes and the Exact Path platform offered a single, accessible resource for instruction. Edmentum Exact Path offers personalized online instruction in mathematics, reading, and language arts to students in grades kindergarten through 12. It adapts to each student's needs and provides assessments that document a student's learning progress.
- Six hundred North Dakota families with pre-school aged children participate in the [Waterford Upstart](#) funded grant program. The NDDPI is looking to meet this demand by funding an additional 800 slots. Families will receive a computer, access to a coach, and, if needed, internet connection to participate.

- i. How the evidence-based programs will specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students, including each of the student groups listed in question A.3. i.--viii. When possible, please indicate which data sources the SEA will use to identify students most in need of summer learning and enrichment programs; and

The NDDPI will use its accountability process to identify schools and students most in need of support and make this information available through its Insights Dashboard. The accountability process uses state assessment data (NDSA), Choice Ready data, Student Engagement surveys, and graduation rate to determine lowest performing schools and its highest priority needs. In addition, the NDDPI has the ability to break down the data by subgroups and has been using data drill downs to identify the needs and create action plans through program management to target resources where they are most needed. Currently, summer programming has been offered locally through either state funding, Federal Title Program funding, or other grants. Through state funding, the NDDPI served approximately 9,000 K-6 students and 15,000 7-12 students in the summer of 2020. However, the NDDPI anticipates that this number will climb significantly with the influx of ESSER funding and is in the process of creating a process to collect better data on those students who attend summer school.

- ii. The extent to which the SEA will use funds it reserves to identify and engage 1) students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years; and 2) students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

The school report passed through HB 1013, requires school districts receiving funds from the elementary and secondary school emergency relief fund to do the following:

- Provide two narrative summary reports to DPI that must include information regarding learning losses of students identified within the district, including subgroup gaps; school district plans to accelerate learning recovery for all students, including closing subgroup gaps
- Must include the impact ESSER funds have had on accelerating learning recovery for the districts' students, including subgroups. By December 1, 2021, districts will submit its first report to NDDPI. At that time, the NDDPI will have the information available to identify gaps and take action with those schools and students who are most in need of additional summer learning and enrichment. Currently, schools have been using local data and needs assessments to identify how to best target students who need additional support.

- Evidence-Based Comprehensive Afterschool Programs: Describe how the SEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(f)(3) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 1 percent of the State's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) for evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs (including, for example, before-school programming), and ensure such

programs respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The description must include:

- i. A description of the evidence-based programs (e.g., including partnerships with community-based organizations) the SEA has selected, and the extent to which the SEA will evaluate the impact of those programs;

The NDDPI assures it will spend 1% of the state's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds for evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs, which minimally amounts to \$3,052,699. The NDDPI will be using this set-aside reserve to offer before/after grant opportunity statewide. Eligible applicants include school districts, community-based organizations such as the Boys/Girls Clubs, YMCAs, and other agencies providing services to schools. Approximately one-third of our school districts receive 21st CCLC funding for afterschool programming. Therefore, the remaining two-thirds of our school districts will be targeted for this grant opportunity, in addition to a wide variety of community-based organizations. The SEA will establish, as part of the grant application, a final report required from each entity so that we will have data available to us to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative.

In addition to this targeted activity with our 1% reserve, the other programs discussed throughout this application, including Exact Path and Schoolhouse.World, also provide excellent opportunities for students to get supplemental assistance at a before or after school program.

- ii. How the evidence-based programs will specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students, including each of the student groups listed in question A.3.i.-viii. When possible, please indicate which data sources the SEA will use to identify students most in need of comprehensive afterschool programming; and

Although the many opportunities being provided are available to all North Dakota students, they truly are targeted to students who have fallen behind and other groups of students that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The application for entities to expand afterschool programs will include priority points for programs who serve high minority students including Native Americans and students in poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted our minority students and students living in poverty in North Dakota.

Districts that would like to expand afterschool programming will have access to student enrollment data that can be submitted. Non-Profit organizations will be required to submit data such as census or KidsCount data that outlines minority and students living poverty living in their communities. In addition, programs will have to submit to the Department of Public Instruction quarterly reports that detail student enrollment data that includes ethnicity counts and the number of students living in poverty.

Priority points will be given to programs that have students that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, such as students that missed the most in-person instruction, did not

consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures, programs having a higher percentage of minority students and students living in poverty.

Programs will be required to communicate with the students' school of attendance and teachers of record. Communication will include but not limited to:

- Student academic strengths and weaknesses,
- Specific standards students are struggling to grasp or are struggling in, and
- Student social emotional health.

The afterschool program will be required to provide interventions in the areas the students need most assistance. Lastly, programs will be required to report on the academic process of students in the quarterly report based on communication with the teacher of record.

- iii. the extent to which the SEA will use funds it reserves to identify and engage 1) students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years; and 2) students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

North Dakota has been extremely fortunate and one of the few states where almost all of our school districts had in-person instruction for the entire 2020-2021 school year. However, there is a plan in place to identify where the most significant learning loss of students may be, including subgroup gaps. Our state legislature, in HB 1013, is requiring all school districts to submit a report to the state superintendent by December 1, 2021, and identify the learning losses of students identified within the district, including subgroup gaps; school district plans to accelerate learning recovery for all students, including closing subgroup gaps.

Districts must include the impact ESSER funds have had on accelerating learning recovery for the districts' students, including subgroups. Therefore, after the NDDPI has had an opportunity to review this data, we will be able to identify where gaps exist, possibly due to those students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years; students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures.

- Emergency Needs: If the SEA plans to reserve funds for emergency needs under section 2001(f)(4) of the ARP Act to address issues responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, describe the anticipated use of those funds, including the extent to which these funds will build SEA and LEA capacity to ensure students' and staff's health and safety; to meet students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs; and to use ARP ESSER funds to implement evidence-based interventions.

The NDDPI will reserve a minimal amount of ESSER III funding for emergency needs under section 2001(f)(4) of the ARP Act to address issues responding to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure students' and staff's health and safety and to meet students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs.

Even during the worst months of the pandemic, the vast majority of ND districts provided in-person learning. Therefore, we do not anticipate a significant need to reserve funds for emergency needs to address issues responding to the COVID-19 pandemic above and beyond the identified ways we have elected to utilize our state level ESSER funding.

However, in order to be prepared for any unforeseen circumstances, the NDDPI will reserve a minimal amount of funding in the unlikely event that there are unexpected emergencies that arise. We do not have identified needs for those reserve funds at this time.

E. Supporting LEAs in Planning for and Meeting Students' Needs

The Department recognizes that the safe return to in-person instruction must be accompanied by a focus on meeting students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs, and by addressing the opportunity gaps that existed before – and were exacerbated by – the pandemic. In this section, SEAs will describe how they will support their LEAs in developing high-quality plans for LEAs' use of ARP ESSER funds to achieve these objectives.

- **LEA Plans for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds:** Describe what the SEA will require its LEAs to include in LEA plans consistent with the ARP ESSER requirements for the use of ARP ESSER funds, how the SEA will require such plans to be made available to the public, and the deadline by which the LEA must submit its ARP ESSER plan (which must be a reasonable timeline and should be within no later than 90 days after receiving its ARP ESSER allocation). The LEA plans must include, at a minimum:
 - i. The extent to which and how the funds will be used to implement prevention and mitigation strategies that are, to the greatest extent practicable, in line with the most recent CDC guidance, in order to continuously and safely operate schools for in-person learning;
 - ii. How the LEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 20 percent of the LEA's total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) to address the academic impact of lost instructional time through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs;
 - iii. How the LEA will spend its remaining ARP ESSER funds consistent with section 2001(e)(2) of the ARP Act; and
 - iv. How the LEA will ensure that the interventions it implements, including but not limited to the interventions under section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, will respond to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students, and particularly those students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including students from low-income families, students of color, English learners, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students.

The LEA grant application will include an assurance that the district approved ESSER III application will be posted to LEA website. The NDDPI Grant Management system allows

the SEA and LEAs the ability to print the approved application to include submitted and approved dates/times.

The NDDPI began the work of supporting our school districts in developing their plans for the use of ARP ESSER funds since the bill was enacted by President Biden on March 11, 2021. We held our first training on March 25, 2021, outlining the ARP requirements so districts could begin the planning process. We have held multiple trainings to share ideas and resources, particularly on the various requirements in the law, including the required 20% set-aside for learning loss, using ESSER funds for construction or renovation projects, visualizing unfinished learning, and understanding the ESSER monitoring requirements.

The NDDPI is encouraging and supporting efforts of LEAs to adopt and commit to five principles to guide their spending; including development of and commitment to a multi-year spending plan.

- Multi-year Spending Plan - This will help them avoid recurring costs and a financial cliff in 2024. It will also help LEAs maintain a long term financial forecast. For example:
 - i. LEAs should plan to spend 40% of funds in the 21-22 school year to expand, scale out and serve more students with proven programs and strategies existing in their schools. Enroll more students in summer learning; hire more instructional coaches and high impact tutors to serve more students, open and staff more out-of-school time programs in more of your schools to serve more students. This will meet the most immediate needs of accelerated learning recovery with proven programs.
 - ii. LEAs should plant to spend 30% of funds in the SY22-23 school year to explore ideas, programs and innovations they believe may provide high impact results but they never had funds to explore before.
 - iii. SY23-24 20% of funding should be used to maintain the proven programs and serve the remaining needs of learning recovery.
 - iv. SY24-25 10% of funding should be used to supplement state and other federal funding sources to maintain effective programs
- Seek **targeted investments** to **increase learning time** for students who need it most
- Identify and report how **equitably** funds are distributed across **all schools** in a district.
- Honor the promise to taxpayers to focus on students and relief
- Be transparent and ensure broad participation in spending decisions
 - i. Engage parents, students, communities and especially boards on spending choices
 - ii. Have building principals gauge whether investments match students' needs with feasibility of success
 - iii. Apply proper procurement protocols
 - iv. Publicly **communicate** all investments, providers and intended benefits

We held a training on May 17, 2021, to outline the process of applying for ESSER III funding. Due to the federal timeline requirements, North Dakota implemented a two-phased process for districts to apply for ESSER III funding.

In Phase I: Districts will submit an “Initial Application” and receive two-thirds of the ESSER III funding.

In Phase II: Districts will submit an ESSER III supplemental application. Once approved, districts will receive the remaining one-third of their ESSER III funding.

The supplemental ESSER III application will require districts to address the following:

- i. The extent to which and how the funds will be used to implement prevention and mitigation strategies that are, to the greatest extent practicable, in line with the most recent CDC guidance, in order to continuously and safely operate schools for in-person learning;
- ii. How the LEA will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act (totaling not less than 20 percent of the LEA’s total allocation of ARP ESSER funds) to address the academic impact of lost instructional time through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs;
- iii. How the LEA will spend its remaining ARP ESSER funds consistent with section 2001(e)(2) of the ARP Act; and
- iv. How the LEA will ensure that the interventions it implements, including but not limited to the interventions under section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, will respond to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students, and particularly those students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including students from low-income families, students of color, English learners, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students.

In order to allow for broad and robust stakeholder input, the ESSER III supplemental application will be due by August 17, 2021. On June 3, 2021, the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders, in collaboration with the NDDPI and the ND School Boards Association, held a statewide convening to discuss the ESSER requirements and brainstorm ideas on the potential use of the ESSER funding. This convening had close to 100% participation from all North Dakota school districts. Each district was required to send a team consisting of the superintendent, business manager, and school board president. This convening was an opportunity to discuss the broad stakeholder engagement requirement with educational leaders.

North Dakota assures that the ESSER III supplemental applications will be submitted in advance of the “90 days after receiving its ARP ESSER allocation” deadline, which would be August 24, 2021.

• LEA Consultation: Describe how the SEA will, in planning for the use of ARP ESSER funds, ensure that, consistent with the ARP ESSER requirements], its LEAs engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders, including, but not limited to:

- i. students;
- ii. families;
- iii. school and district administrators (including special education administrators); and
- iv. teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions.

The LEA must also engage in meaningful consultation with each of the following to the extent present in or served by the LEA:

- i. Tribes;
- ii. civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations); and
- iii. stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students.

The description must also include how the SEA will ensure that LEAs provide the public the opportunity to provide input in the development of the LEA's plan for the use of ARP ESSER funds and take such input into account.

The NDDPI has identified several methods we will use to ensure the ARP ESSER requirements pertaining to the stipulation for LEAs to engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders is met.

- COVID Funding Training Series

The NDDPI is conducting a Covid Funding Training Series”, which highlights the key provisions within law. The first training, regarding “Addressing the Learning Loss Requirements for ESSER Funding,” was held on Tuesday, April 27. Each week, additional trainings are held. This training series will continue throughout the summer. Following each training the recording and PowerPoint are posted on our website for those educators who were unable to attend. The training schedule is available [here](#). The majority of these trainings discuss the requirement for school districts to get broad input from their stakeholders.

- Frequent Communication

The NDDPI publishes a “Weekly Blast” that shares key information with North Dakota educators. Each week, from the inception of the pandemic in March 2020, this weekly communication shared key information and updates regarding ESSER funding. This communication has a broad audience and was an opportunity to share crucial ESSER information with the field.

- ESSER II/III Application/Guidance

Both the ESSER II and ESSER III LEA application require districts to complete a narrative outlining how they obtained broad stakeholder input on the proposed use of their ESSER funding. Trainings were held to go through the application. The

trainings and guidance reiterated the importance of addressing learning loss with the funding.

- Statewide Convening

On June 3, 2021, the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders, in collaboration with the NDDPI and the ND School Boards Association, held a statewide convening to discuss the ESSER requirements and brainstorm ideas on the potential use of the ESSER funding. This convening had close to 100% participation from all North Dakota school districts. Each district was required to send a team consisting of the superintendent, business manager, and school board president. This convening was an opportunity to discuss the broad stakeholder engagement requirement with educational leaders.

- ESSER Monitoring

The NDDPI recognizes that there are a multitude of state and federal regulations that LEAs must adhere to regarding the ESSER II and III funding. With that in mind, we have created a multi-layered monitoring process with regard to the ESSER requirements. The NDDPI intends to contract with three to four retired educators to conduct ESSER desk monitoring. Part of the ESSER monitoring will include a review of how districts engaged and will continue to engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders.

- Describe how the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs in using ARP ESSER funds.

The description must include:

- i. How the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs' implementation of evidence-based interventions that respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs, such as through summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs – including the extent to which the SEA will collect evidence of the effectiveness of interventions employed;

North Dakota has a robust plan to support and monitor our LEAs in using their ESSER funds. We have identified multiple approaches to supporting and monitoring LEAs in their implementation of evidence-based interventions that respond to students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The NDDPI has provided training to school districts on both the evidence-based requirements in ESEA and on providing interventions to students. In addition, we have numerous resources on both posted on our NDDPI website. The schools have been informed that activities coded to the 20% required learning loss set-aside do need to meet one of the four tiers of evidence-based interventions and that they must reference or include supporting documentation, research articles, websites, etcetera, that support the practices utilized when the ESSER desk audits occur.

The schools have also been notified multiple times that they will need to collect evidence of effectiveness on the interventions they are implementing. North Dakota just recently finished our 2021 Legislative Assembly. House Bill 1013 passed with language outlining what reports schools will need to submit to the NDDPI addressing the interventions they implemented and the impact they had on accelerating learning recovery.

ND HB 1013, SECTION 24. LEARNING LOSS, ACCELERATED LEARNING RECOVERY, AND ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND - REPORT TO LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT.

School districts receiving funds from the elementary and secondary school emergency relief fund:

- Must provide two narrative summary reports to DPI
- Must include information regarding learning losses of students identified within the district, including subgroup gaps; school district plans to accelerate learning recovery for all students, including closing subgroup gaps
- Must include use of ESSER funds by category
- Must include the impact ESSER funds have had on accelerating learning recovery for the districts' students, including subgroups

Important Dates:

- By December 1, 2021 – District submits report #1 to NDDPI
- By June 1, 2022 – NDDPI reports to legislative management
- December 1, 2022 – District submits report #2 to NDDPI
- Legislative Session 2023 – NDDPI provides legislative report

- ii. How the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs in specifically addressing the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on certain groups of students, including each of the student groups listed in question A.3.i.-viii; and

The various offices in the NDDPI which oversee programming for the various subgroups of students frequently at-risk, including special education, English learners, migrant, homeless, etcetera, have all provided support to LEAs to assist them in addressing the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This support occurred through multiple trainings and frequent correspondence sharing guidelines and resources. In addition, HB 1013, as outlined above in 3(i), requires school districts receiving funds from the elementary and secondary school emergency relief fund to provide two narrative summary reports to DPI specifically including information regarding learning losses of student subgroup gaps, school district plans to accelerate learning recovery for closing subgroup gaps, and address the impact ESSER funds have had on accelerating learning recovery for the student subgroups.

- iii. How the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs in using ARP ESSER funds to identify, reengage, and support students most likely to have experienced the impact of lost instructional time on student learning, such as:
 - a. Students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years;
 - b. Students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures; and
 - c. Students most at-risk of dropping out of school.

North Dakota has been extremely fortunate and one of the few states where almost all of our school districts had in-person instruction for the entire 2020-2021 school year. However, there is a plan in place to identify where the most significant learning loss of students may be, including subgroup gaps. Our state legislature, in HB 1013, is requiring all school districts to submit a report to the state superintendent by December 1, 2021, and identify the learning losses of students identified within the district, including subgroup gaps; school district plans to accelerate learning recovery for all students, including closing subgroup gaps.

Districts must include the impact ESSER funds have had on accelerating learning recovery for the districts, including subgroups. Therefore, after the NDDPI has had an opportunity to review this data, we will be able to identify where gaps exist, possibly due to those students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures. Once we identify these students, the NDDPI can then target our support, assistance, and funding to where it is needed the most.

- Describe the extent to which the SEA will support its LEAs in implementing additional strategies for taking educational equity into account in expending ARP ESSER funds, including but not limited to:
 - i. Allocating funding both to schools and for districtwide activities based on student need, and
 - ii. Implementing an equitable and inclusive return to in-person instruction. An inclusive return to in-person instruction includes, but is not limited to, establishing policies and practices that avoid the over-use of exclusionary discipline measures (including in- and out-of-school suspensions) and creating a positive and supportive learning environment for all students.

The need to address equity has been at the forefront in education for many years. Under the NCLB Act, each state submitted a state equity plan in 2015. North Dakota created a committee to help create the equity plan and to obtain broad stakeholder input. This plan included a multitude of strategies and activities our state identified to address equity.

One of Superintendent Baesler's priorities since being elected as the North Dakota state superintendent is a focus on equity. Supt. Baesler participated in an equity fellowship with the Aspen Institute to continue and promote the important equity work statewide.

4.i. The new federal financial reporting requirement in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requiring all public schools to report per-pupil federal and non-federal costs, and for states to collect and report this information was the impetus needed to shine a light on the importance of financial transparency.

North Dakota has made significant headway on this ESSA provision and had our data submitted on our dashboard by the June 30, 2020, deadline. The new maintenance of equity requirement outlined in the American Rescue plan will also help protect funding levels for districts and schools that have high percentages of students living in poverty. This reporting requirement will further financial transparency while helping schools make decisions to promote fairness, equity, and academic success for all students.

North Dakota is contracting with two reputable entities to further our work in this area. We will be collaborating with the Hunt Institute to work specifically with key districts on a pilot to conduct equity audits. This will result in a statewide roadmap to advance equity in our schools. In addition, we are contracting with Otis Ed to continue our financial transparency work under ESSA. Our goal is to provide transparent information to the general public regarding school spending and to promote the allocation of additional funding based on student need. Both of these ongoing initiatives will allow the NDDPI to provide guidance and support to school districts to address equity when making decisions on the ESSER spending.

4.ii. North Dakota has a renewed focus on equity. We have recently reached out to the Hunt Institute to assist our districts in understanding barriers to equity for marginalized populations within their district including students with special needs, students in poverty, and students in a minority race and determine high-impact opportunities to disrupt barriers to equity for underserved students.

Through equity audits, the Hunt Institute aims to support districts to understand the extent to which their policies, practices, and behaviors that either erase or exacerbate inequity. Leveraging achievement data, educator surveys, student surveys, policies, teacher retention, and additional key data, the Institute provides districts with recommendations aimed at closing achievement gaps including:

01. Building a shared commitment and ownership of equity work across the district.
02. Investing in explicit, ongoing, coordinated equity-focused professional learning for all district staff.
03. Revising school and district policies.
04. Creating structures to ensure multiple stakeholder voices (students, families, staff) inform decision making.
05. Redesigning recruitment and hiring practices to obtain more diverse candidates.

According to data available at [Insights.nd.gov](https://insights.nd.gov), academic disparities exist across districts in North Dakota, with gaps in achievement existing amongst disability, economic, language, and race groups. In 2019-20, while 52 percent of white and Asian students in North Dakota demonstrated proficiency or above in English/Language Arts (ELA), only 26 percent of Native American students, 33 percent of Black students, and 34 percent of Hispanic students demonstrated proficiency in ELA.

As 14 percent of English Learners demonstrated proficiency in ELA in 2019-20, the percentage of English Learners who are growing at the expected trajectory to successfully exit the English Learner program decreased from 47 percent in SY2017-18 to 36 percent in SY2019-20. And while 90 percent of white students obtained a diploma within four years of entering ninth grade, 73 percent of Indigenous students obtained a diploma within four years, a consistent gap over the previous three years. And we know, based on early data, that the pandemic continues to exacerbate these gaps.

As North Dakota's school districts work to realize North Dakota's PK-12 Education Strategic Vision to ensure all students will graduate Choice Ready, these academic disproportionalities confirm the need for a closer look at the achievement and access data using an equity audit.

F. Supporting the Educator Workforce

The Department recognizes the toll that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken on the Nation's educators as well as students. In this section, SEAs will describe strategies for supporting and stabilizing the educator workforce and for making staffing decisions that will support students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs.

- **Supporting and Stabilizing the Educator Workforce:**

- i. Describe the extent to which the State is facing shortages of educators, education administration personnel, and other school personnel involved in safely reopening schools, and the extent to which they vary by region/type of school district and/or groups of educators (e.g., special educators and related services personnel and paraprofessionals; bilingual or English as a second language educators; science, technology, engineering, and math ("STEM") educators; career and technical education ("CTE") educators; early childhood educators). Cite specific data on shortages and needs where available.

F 1 (i.) Teacher Shortage Answer:

A team of NDDPI staff and NDUS staff reviewed and discussed several data points regarding teacher shortages in the state of North Dakota. Critical need and Teacher Shortage Areas were determined by comparing data including Administrator Surveys, STARS data including: Irregular FTE's, Unfilled Positions, a combination of Irregular FTE's, and Unfilled Positions and Shortage Percentages. By cross-referencing the data points, it was determined the top five Critical Need positions and Shortage positions in ND.

The aforementioned teacher critical need and shortage area documents have been provided to the Educational Standards and Practices Board (ESPB). With that data, ESPB has declared all teaching areas a shortage or critical need. This makes it easier for districts to apply for Federal teacher loan forgiveness.

From reviewing the data, our top five critical need areas are Special Education (K-12), Counselors, Science (9-12), Fine & Perf. Arts (9-12), and Ag. Education (9-12). These areas are most especially critical because they are in demand in both our rural and "urban" areas. By in-large, over 90% of North Dakota is considered rural.

Regarding Shortage areas, the need is only in our rural areas, which again, is 90% of the state's land mass, Elementary (1-6), Middle School (7-8), Math (9-12), Library Media Specialist, and World Languages (9-12).

All areas below in Table F1, and all positions in ND below are deemed critical need by the ESPB.

Complete the table below, changing or adding additional rows as needed, or provide a narrative description.

Table F1.

Area	Data on shortages and needs	Narrative description
Special educators and related service personnel and paraprofessionals		
Bilingual educators		
English as a second language educators		
STEM educators		
CTE educators		
Early childhood educators		
School counselors		
Social workers		
Nurses		
School psychologists		

- ii. Describe how the SEA will assist its LEAs in identifying the most urgent areas of shortages or potential shortages, with particular plans for individual LEAs facing the most significant needs (e.g., by avoiding layoffs, providing high-quality professional learning opportunities, and addressing the impact of stress or trauma on educators). Include a description of how other Federal COVID-19 funding (e.g., ESSER and GEER funds under the CARES Act and CRRSA Act) have already been used to avoid layoffs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

F 1 (ii.) Answer:

CARES and CRRSA funding has been used to pay salaries of teachers and support staff since March 2020 to continue education, food and transportation services to students.

In partnership with NDDHS in December 2020, the Behavioral Health in Education: Resources and Opportunities (B-HERO) Technical Assistance Center was established. Phase 1 of development includes dissemination of weekly resources for ND BHRCs targeting a variety of school community stakeholders. Phase 2 will include development and facilitation of training. Phase 3 will develop a community of practice for BHRCs to share successes and perceived barriers to supporting behavioral health needs within their school communities.

In partnership with NDDHS separate weekly support group virtual calls were held to bring together teachers (group 1), elementary students (group 2), middle school students (group 3) and high school students (group 4) with mental health professionals.

The NDDPI has paid for PD opportunities for teachers such as the ND Ignite conference on cybersecurity, cyber awareness and technology innovation. NDDPI has also provided subscriptions to ND teachers to LINCSpring. The North Dakota Department of Public

Instruction (NDDPI) contracted with Cognia™ to provide all North Dakota educators access to high quality, proven professional learning content, practical resources, and coaching support via the online coaching and professional learning platform, LINCspring. LINCspring, accessible via single sign on through the myJourney (aka eProve) portal, provides online access to expert coaches, over 65 asynchronous learning modules, and dozens of real-time learning events to support teachers in the development of high-quality blended, remote, and hybrid learning experiences.

Through Cognia, leaders already have access to the myJourney portal where LINCspring is also available. Educators can take advantage of as many of the resources as they'd like, whether they prefer online modules, live workshops via Zoom, or want to access a team of expert coaches for support. To help with implementation, Cognia is now providing customized support to district and school leaders to assist in professional development efforts and implementation of LINCspring.

COVID-19 Resource Center for educators. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) is dedicated to gathering local, regional, and national resources for anyone in the education field. This resource center is designed to be a one-stop-shop to help school, educators, students, parents, and caregivers by providing access to educational supports and resources. NDDPI has provided a variety of resources to the field which can be found here: <https://www.nd.gov/dpi/familiescommunity/nddpi-updates-and-guidance-covid-19/resource-center>.

Regarding educator job security for educators. NDDPI has continuously provided guidance to districts that they can continue to pay staff to support education needs in the state. North Dakota quickly started distance learning which ensured staff had access to their jobs and avoided layoffs.

- iii. Describe the actions the SEA will take to fill anticipated gaps in certified teachers for the start of the 2021-2022 school year and to what extent the SEA will further support its LEAs in expanding the educator pipeline and educator diversity while addressing the immediate needs of students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic (e.g., recruiting teaching candidates to provide high-dosage tutoring or implementing residencies for teacher candidates).

F 1 (iii.) Answer: *During the recent legislative session a bill was approved to expand the scope of alternative programs which as of 2019 allows nine content areas, and now includes special education (SB 2332). The Education Standards and Practices Board also approved Administrative Rules in October 2020 to allow teachers to teach “out of field” for two years while schools seek to find highly qualified teachers to staff hard to fill positions. ESPB also works with Institutions of Higher Education to place pre-service teachers in internships in areas which are hard to fill with the anticipation of becoming the teacher of record upon program completion. Several institutions in the state have established MOU’s with Tribal*

Schools to foster extended internships and diversity experiences in hope of a long term commitment on the part of the preservice teacher. Finally, another bill during the recent Legislative session (HB 1388) requires all teacher educators to receive training in reading competencies, including diagnosis and correction to prepare them to work with struggling readers of all ages.

The NDDPI has developed a Web-Based Education Employment Recruitment System that is available to all school districts in North Dakota for the recruitment of qualified teachers, administrators, and support staff in general and special education. Marketing of the system occurs nationally, therefore North Dakota job openings are available to job seekers across the country. Districts and Special Education Units may post their openings at schooljobsnd.com. The Recruitment and Employment System assists North Dakota schools in competitive recruiting and placement of qualified school staff.

CARES and CRRSA ESSER funding were used to expand the special education para-to-teacher pathway scholarship programming increasing the number of the cohorts by over 40 individuals.

- **Staffing to Support Student Needs:** Describe the extent to which the SEA has developed or will develop strategies and will support its LEAs in increasing student access to key support staff within school buildings, including school counselors, special education personnel, nurses, social workers, and psychologists (e.g., hiring additional personnel or freeing up these staff to focus on providing services to students).

House Bill 1013, which was passed by the recent legislative session, will require elementary schools to employ a school counselor starting with the 2022-2023 school year. Schools must have one full time school counselor for every 300 students, and that can be prorated for schools with under 300 students.

Also, the department is now offering Credentials allowing for special ed technician (House Bill 1188).

Furthermore, ND has developed and is implementing a Web-based Recruitment and Employment system that is available to all school districts in the state, free of charge, to continue to recruit qualified teachers, administrators, and support staff in general and special education. The Recruitment and Employment System assists North Dakota schools in competitive recruiting and placement of qualified school staff. The Office of Special Education provides grants to Universities for a Resident Teacher Program, a Para-to-Teacher Pathway Program, Speech Pathologist Para-Professional Scholarships, and a Traineeship Scholarship Program. All of these programs enable pre-service and practicing teachers to enhance their skills and qualifications as a special education teacher or a related service provider. Lastly, regarding Special Education in Particular, the 67th legislative assembly allowed the NDDPI to issue a certificate for special education technicians which creates a pathway for special education paraprofessional to become special education teachers.

Finally, with a big win for all teachers, House Bill 1388 gave school's a 1% increase for the 2021-2022 school year, and an additional 1% increase the following 2022-2023 year. 70% of this new funding must go to non-administrator staff salaries. This is a valuable recruitment and retainment tool for districts. The NDDPI highly advocated for and worked with legislators on this bill.

G. Monitoring and Measuring Progress

The Department recognizes that transparency on how ARP ESSER funds are used and their impact on the Nation's education system is a fundamental responsibility of Federal, State, and local government. In this section, SEAs will describe how they are building capacity at the SEA and LEA levels to ensure high-quality data collection and reporting and to safeguard funds for their intended purposes.

- **Capacity for Data Collection and Reporting:** It is important for an SEA to continuously monitor progress and make adjustments to its strategies, as well as to support its LEAs in making adjustments to LEA strategies, based on impact. Describe how the SEA will ensure its capacity and the capacity of its LEAs to collect data on reporting requirements, including but not limited to the examples of reporting requirements described in the SEA's Grant Award Notification (listed in Appendix B). Describe the SEA's capacity and strategy to collect data from its LEAs (disaggregated by student group, where applicable), to the greatest extent practicable, including any steps the SEA will take to build its capacity in the future (which may include the use of ARP ESSER and other Federal COVID-19 pandemic funds at the SEA and LEA levels), on issues that may include the following:

- i. Student learning, including the academic impact of lost instructional time during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- ii. Opportunity to learn measures (e.g., chronic absenteeism; student engagement; use of exclusionary discipline; access to and participation in advanced coursework; access to technology, including educator access to professional development on the effective use of technology; access to high-quality educators; access to school counselors, social workers, nurses, and school psychologists; and results from student, parent, and/or educator surveys);
- iii. Fiscal data that is comparable across the State (e.g., per-pupil expenditures at the LEA and school levels);
- iv. Jobs created and retained (by position type);
- v. Participation in programs funded by ARP ESSER resources (e.g., summer and afterschool programs); and
- vi. Other reporting requirements reasonably required by the Secretary (please refer to Appendix B of this template; final requirements will be issued separately).

(i.): The NDDPI and the state continued to operate throughout the pandemic. Schools were either face-to-face; hybrid or distance learning; we expanded our capacity to track learning mode per mode as stated in previous A 5. In distance learning plans all districts were required to assess students via an interim/diagnostic assessment of their choice If they used NWEA NDDPI can access the data. This data can be disaggregated by subgroups. In

addition, the NDDPI administered the statewide summative assessment without any major changes with a relatively high participation rate of about 92%. We have the ability to dig down into the data to explore and investigate results – including what students and student subgroups that didn't test. Once data is available, the NDDPI will interpret and identify learning gaps. Districts are also required to report on how they are responding to student subgroup needs.

(ii.): The NDDPI currently has measures in place to collect all opportunity to learn measures. As part of the strategic planning process resources will be provided to enable districts to make decisions to close learning gaps.

(iii.): The NDDPI began collecting school level financial data for the 2019-2020 school year. School and district level per pupil expenditures are available for the public on the North Dakota Insights dashboard. The Insights dashboard compares per student spending at a school, district, and state level. NDDPI has contracted with Otis Educational Systems, Inc. to do a review of the NDDPI's financial data collections and publications to enhance the data being presented.

(iv.): Yes. We have the capacity through our STARS system to track FTEs in every LEA in the state. Including new FTE's or lost FTE's; additionally, to track this data and respond appropriately.

(v.): Summer/Afterschool Programming (21st CCLC). Currently 21st CCLC grantees contracts with a vendor named CitySpan who collects all 21st CCLC data. This data includes: attendance, activities, staff, student demographics; this information will also be reported in the 21 APR federal data collection program. The NDDPI has access to this data. We are working with CitySpan and North Dakota Information Technology (NDIT) to create data sharing MOU's. NDDPI will be contracting with CitySpan around data storage and sharing. Regarding capacity, NDDPI has three dedicated staff to work on data collection and reporting. **State funded Summer School:** The NDDPI collects data on pre- approved summer school programs through our State Automated Reporting System (STARS). The data includes enrollment (elementary, middle/jr. high, secondary, and drivers ed) attendance; student demographics; start date end date; hours of each course and credit if applicable; and teacher information.

(vi.): The NDDPI has all metrics in place and has been tracking all requirements in Appendix B. NDDPI is continually refining and perfecting our data collections systems.

- **Monitoring and Internal Controls:** Describe how the SEA will implement appropriate fiscal monitoring of and internal controls for the ARP ESSER funds (e.g., by updating the SEA's plan for monitoring funds and internal controls under the CARES and CRRSA Acts; addressing potential sources of waste, fraud, and abuse; conducting random audits; or other tools). In this response, please describe the SEA's current capacity to monitor ARP ESSER;

steps, if needed, to increase capacity; and any foreseeable gaps in capacity, including how the SEA will provide its LEAs with technical assistance in the anticipated areas of greatest need.

The NDDPI has created a management structure for implementing all three ESSER funding grants that will ensure the necessary oversight and proper implementation of the ESSER fund program.

To effectively manage the ESSER funds, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) established an ESSER team consisting of experienced department staff:

ESSER Lead – Laurie Matzke: Laurie Matzke is the Assistant Superintendent in the NDDPI. Laurie oversees federal programming in the department. She has been the key personnel responsible for submitting reports and other key information to the USED regarding ESSER funding, as well as approving claims and quarterly reports for local educational agencies. The department is planning to hire an ESSER program manager going forward to assist with the ESSER implementation.

Fiscal Lead – Jamie Mertz: Jamie Mertz is the director for the Office of Fiscal Management in the NDDPI. Jamie will oversee the financial management, internal controls, and the auditing process for the ESSER funds.

WebGrants Lead – Rebecca Pollert: Rebecca Pollert is an assistant director in the Office of Fiscal Management. LEAs will use the department's grants management system, WebGrants, to claim reimbursement of their ESSER dollars and complete their quarterly reports. Rebecca will oversee the claims within WebGrants, as well as provide guidance and technical assistance on the grants management system.

Nonpublic School Lead – Ann Ellefson: Ann Ellefson is the director of Academic Support. She will provide guidance and technical assistance to non-public school personnel and monitor LEAs on the equitable services provision as well as oversee the EANS program. She will work closely with our state ombudsman on non-public school issues.

ESSER Support – Lisa Johnson: Lisa Johnson is a program manager in the department and will provide support in all areas pertaining to the management of the ESSER funds. She will review reimbursement claims, quarterly reports, and other ESSER documents, ensuring that multiple staff have reviewed and monitored LEA documents for compliance with the federal requirements. The NDDPI plans to hire additional fiscal technicians to help process ESSER claims expeditiously.

Shauna Greff – Shauna Greff is the grants manager for the ESSER funding.

The NDDPI has strong internal controls that ensure the accuracy and reliability of the management of financial and programmatic information, and identify risks, both internal and subrecipient risks, associated with implementing the program based on past performance, and identify strategies for mitigating such risks. There are clearly written operating fiscal and procurement policies in place, which provide clarity and instruction to those involved in the grant management process. The NDDPI leadership recognizes the importance of sound internal controls and risk management practices for the governance of taxpayer funds. Every

two years, NDDPI conducts a formal review of its internal risks, which is reviewed by external auditors.

All controls that are in place for our other federal grant programs would apply to ESSER funds as well. Annually, we complete risk assessments of subrecipients. The ESSER program would be included in those assessments. Subrecipients identified as high risk receive increased monitoring.

The NDDPI has strong documentation necessary to support fiscal reviews, including audits (single audit and audits by the Office of the Inspector General) and improper payment assessments, as requested by the Department or the Department's contractor. All subrecipient grant payments are made from the State's WebGrants system. This system retains all information pertaining to payments. All other payments information is stored in the State's accounting system. All of this information is available for review for an extended period of time based on the State's record retention policy.

III ii - Subrecipient Monitoring Plan

The NDDPI has developed a comprehensive subrecipient monitoring plan that will ensure significant oversight of the LEA ESSER funds to ensure they are being used as approved and on allowable activities.

A risk assessment for all federal grant subrecipients is performed with each new grant and for formula grants at a minimum annually, during the grant award process. Risk factors include, but are not limited to:

- *Prior Experience/Performance
- *New Personnel
- *Prior Monitoring Findings
- *Late Reporting
- *Data Submission Errors
- *Grant Award Amount
- *Audit Findings
- *Lapsed Funds
- *Maintenance of Effort Violations

The risk assessment is performed by state agency staff. If a grant recipient is found to be high risk, the grant may have additional conditions imposed on the award up to and including:

- *Requiring submission of an accounting ledger with every request for funds for state agency review
- *Requiring additional program compliance monitoring
- *State may establish additional prior approvals (i.e., prior approval on expenditures)
- *State agency staff may perform a desk audit of the financial activity of the grant recipient
- *Requiring the non-federal entity to obtain management assistance or technical assistance

The NDDPI completes the annual risk assessment process/checklist for all public LEAs annually during the summer. The NDDPI will be updating our risk assessment process to

include the ESSER dollars. The new criteria will be used to rank and prioritize which LEAs are a higher risk and subsequently will have additional conditions imposed on their award.

Listed below are the methods the NDDPI will utilize to monitor the ESSER funds for compliance:

1) Use the NDDPI grants management system, WebGrants, for collecting reimbursement and oversight purposes.

WebGrants manages grants through the complete grant cycle, from application through closeout. The system allows recipients to utilize one platform for the life of their grant. Grant recipients can apply for funding opportunities, claim funds, submit reports, and communicate with the grant program managers in one system. All historical information and system activities are available for recipients to refer back to or even print copies at any time. WebGrants time/date stamps all activities and the user who is associated with the created or edited system function. The system allows NDDPI to post grant opportunities, review applications, award grant funds, and monitor programs. It is a single stop for all associated activities and document repository for everything associated with a particular grant in the system.

2) Have LEAs submit their ledger of expenditures with all reimbursement claims to verify allowability.

The department's grants management system, WebGrants, will require all LEAs to upload a copy of their local accounting ledger and copies of supporting documentation (i.e. invoices/receipts) each time they submit a reimbursement claim. This will allow NDDPI staff to monitor and review expenditures to ensure the allowability of all activities and purchases made with ESSER funds.

3) Desk reviews

The NDDPI will be contracting with external experienced educators to assist with desk reviews to ensure compliance with all of the ESSER federal regulations. These contracted monitors will conduct site visits to school districts to review records, policies, and internal accounting records.

4) Review quarterly reports to ensure allowability of expenditures

The CARES Act requires Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that receive ESSER funds to report certain information about their spending on a quarterly basis.

As required in Section 15011(b)(2), the NDDPI will require recipients of CARES Act funds to report:

*The total amount of funds received

*The amount spent or obligated for each project or activity

*A detailed list of all projects or activities supported with CARES Act funds (including name, description and estimated number of jobs created or retained (where applicable)), and

*Detailed information on subcontracts and subgrantees, including FFATA data elements, as prescribed by OMB

The NDDPI has created a quarterly report, similar to the one LEAs submitted for the AARA funds in 2009. This report will be built within the WebGrants system once we receive final details from the USED. The first quarterly report will be due on August 11, 2020. The quarterly reports will allow NDDPI staff to monitor and review expenditures on a quarterly basis to ensure LEAs are using the ESSER funds on allowable activities.

The NDDPI Office of Fiscal Management has also created and provided LEAs with accounting codes to specifically track their local ESSER dollars. This will allow LEAs to track the ESSER funds separately and to easily report on the use of these dollars.

The NDDPI believes that we have established a strong, comprehensive plan to monitor and provide oversight over the ESSER funds to ensure they are used for allowable, reasonable, and necessary costs.